

# Making Meaning of International Internships: A Qualitative Investigation

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**BOSTON COLLEGE**

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MAKING MEANING OF INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIPS: A QUALITATIVE  
INVESTIGATION

Dissertation

By

Mark Kenyon

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# Making Meaning of International Internships: A Qualitative Investigation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

American college students have an unprecedented range of international opportunities available to broaden their world view and deepen their understanding of global issues, whether through formal study abroad programs, international internships, international volunteer projects or work abroad opportunities. However, students too frequently accumulate international experiences in an ad hoc fashion, absent from any clear relationship to their curricular choices and unrelated to their career goals.

Substantial research has been conducted on internships as a form of experiential learning as well as study abroad as a basis for global learning. Both internships and study abroad have a long tradition in American higher education, however there is very limited research on the combination of these two activities in international internships.

This study focuses on a cohort of students who traveled to Beijing, China in the course of one semester as they live and learn together, alongside students from multiple American universities, internship supervisors, and faculty and staff from the Chinese Studies Program. To better understand the features of the international internships that contribute to students' intercultural development, this study examined the real and perceived development of a group of students ( $N=8$ ) engaged in international internships utilizing Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning using a case study approach.

Program conditions that nurtured students' international internship experience included aspects of their international internship placements, facilitated contact with natives in and outside the work environment, academic coursework, and student self-initiated exploration. Analysis of the participant narratives indicates a web of interconnected features that provided the foundation for students to get out of their comfort zone, reflect on their experience, and gain confidence to navigate a new culture and language to enhance the international experience. The results open up new possibilities for inquiry into international internships programs and their connections to experiential learning and careers.

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## Making Meaning of International Internships: A Qualitative Investigation

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Study

American college students have an unprecedented range of international opportunities available to broaden their world view and deepen their understanding of global issues, whether through formal study abroad programs, international internships, international volunteer projects or work abroad opportunities. However, students too frequently accumulate international experiences in an ad hoc fashion, absent from any clear relationship to their curricular choices and unrelated to their career goals. In order to be prepared for the current job market, today's graduates need to be intellectually resilient, interculturally competent, and prepared for a future of life-long learning. Understanding and effectively navigating other societies and cultures is no longer a matter of choice but has become essential for working and living successfully in a globalizing world (Morais & Ogdan, 2011).

Amid a push for internationalization, American higher education has begun a transition into a new era, one in which institutions are responding to calls to prepare their students to engage competently in a globalizing and increasingly interdependent world (Altbach, 1998; Bennett & Salonen, 2007; Cornwell & Stoddard, 2006). Increasing numbers of higher education institutions have begun to pursue approaches that further internationalize their campuses and the undergraduate curriculum (Brustein, 2007). One form of internationalization in American higher education is the growing trend of international internships for the production of global citizens. Coming from a long but

inconsistent history of hands-on vocational goals and an influential theory of learning by doing, international internship opportunities have increased in the past ten years. This phenomenon is evident in the pipeline of over 18,000 American college students earning academic credit for an international internship or work abroad experience in 2016 (IIE, 2016).

With increasing numbers of American college students taking part in international internships, a growing discourse focuses on how these experiences influence students' development as globally competent citizens. Hunter, White, and Godbey (2006) suggest that to become a global citizen is to establish one's self-awareness, cultural sensitivity and an open attitude toward differences. However, there is very little research that explores the global citizenship transformation taking place through the lens of a student's experience on an international internship. This fact opens up the opportunity for more inquiry to inform the academy on what is exactly going on during this phenomenon.

Substantial research has been written about internships as a form of experiential learning as well as study abroad as a basis for global learning. Both internships and study abroad have a long tradition in American higher education. However there is very limited research on the combination of these activities in international internships. Past studies have focused on either internships or international experiences independently. Major questions remain unanswered: Why do undergraduate students pursue international internships? How do students perceive their international internship experiences? What do students gain from international internships in terms of personal growth, career development, and global learning? Identifying the answers to these questions would assist

faculty, study abroad advisors, career counselors, and employers to help students in identifying international internships that would best meet their learning objectives.

For the purpose of this study, internships can be defined as a class of experiential programs that bridge the gap between the world of work and education (NSEE, 2009). They center on the idea of students making real-world application of skills learned in the academic setting. An internship is further defined as any official or formal work experience that provides practical career experience for beginners in an occupation or profession. For undergraduate American college students, an internship is often completed during the summer or during an academic semester. However internships can take place at any time, including periods not defined within the academic year. An internship experience characteristically includes supervision by a more experienced professional. Along with supervision, a mentoring relationship can develop through the experience. The mentoring relationship may develop organically with the supervisor or with another professional in the organization. There are also clear task, assignments, responsibilities, and projects for the intern to work on during the experience. A formalized training period usually takes place at the beginning of the internship with points of reflection woven into the fabric of the experience. Internships can be unpaid or paid. If the internship is paid, compensation can take the form of (hourly, salary, or stipend) payments and/or academic credit (Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2000; Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000; Zanville & Markwood 1982).

International internships add a global perspective to the structures mentioned above by virtue of taking place in country outside of the United States. Typically involving five, seven, or ten week experiences, the programs are developed to give

students an opportunity to gain work knowledge, to be exposed to an international organization's operations, and to experience acculturation through sufficient time in country (Furnham & Bockner, 1986).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This qualitative multi-case study addresses several needs. The most pressing need is a lack of research concerning international internships, specifically how students make meaning of these phenomena along with how the experience informs their global citizenship. In other words how does the individual reflect on the actions and reactions of situations and scenarios taking place during an international internship to understand the deeper meaning and process of what they learned? International internships offer students a unique opportunity to make connections among academic, cultural, and professional learning as well as personal growth (Jang, 2009). Through the process of making meaning, students will hopefully be able to connect the dots to clarify and examine their own world of meaning in relation to the international internship and the world of work.

American colleges and universities are deeply concerned with internationalizing their campuses to respond to forces of globalization. Internationalization is the conscious effort to integrate and infuse international, intercultural, and global dimensions into the ethos and outcomes of higher education including: institutional mission, vision and values; student education and academic mobility; curriculum, instruction and research; faculty development; administrative structure, experiential learning and internship opportunities offered by higher education institutions (Morais & Ogdan, 2011; NAFSA, 2003). Colleges and universities have a responsibility to prepare their students with the



educational means to compete in a dynamic workplace in a continually changing global environment (Morais & Ogdan, 2011).

International internships are one structure for universities and colleges to do that. An increasing number of students are participating in international internships (Green, Luu, & Burris, 2008). Although there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence to suggest that these experiences are meaningful, there is little scholarly research that shows the extent to which international internships actually lead to measurable increases in student learning and global citizenship. This study strives to create a discussion within the academy on how international internships can impact a student's global citizenship and career goals.

By using qualitative research methods to study one international internship program, I was able to find themes, issues, and patterns to generate hypotheses and to build theories about relationships that may otherwise remain hidden (Creswell, 2002; Gubrium, & Holstein, 2000). Reeves (2004) proposed that the methodology of a case study is an asset in providing a venue for researchers to synthesize experiences from multiple contexts in a compressed period of time. The case study brings to bear a rich variety of experiences and can be applied to the real issues occurring in educational settings (Reeves, 2004).

This analysis will be useful to higher education faculty and administrators working to better understand this growing phenomenon. A comprehensive qualitative study of student experiences on an international internship will be particularly valuable when developing student services programming, establishing institutional policy for

international programs (i.e. international institutional partnerships), making international program curricular decisions, and considering marketing and outreach strategies.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Career Development** - The evolution or development of a career – which is a lifelong process informed by (1) Experience within a specific field of interest (with career, job, or task specific skills as by-product) (2) Success at each stage of development, (3) educational attainment commensurate with each incremental stage, (4) Communications (the capacity to analytically reflect one's suitability for a given job via cover letter, resume, and/or the interview process), and (5) understanding of career development as a navigable process.

**Cooperative Education** - from its beginnings at the University of Cincinnati in 1903, cooperative education has evolved into a program offered at the secondary and post-secondary levels in two predominant models (Grubb & Villeneuve, 1995). In one model, students alternate a semester of academic coursework with an equal amount of time in paid employment, repeating this cycle several times until graduation. The parallel method splits the day between school and work, typically structured to accommodate the student's class schedule. Thus, like school-to-work (STW), the co-op model includes school-based and work-based learning and, in the best programs, "connecting activities" such as seminars and teacher-coordinator work site visits. These activities help students explicitly connect work and learning. (Johnston, Angerilli, & Gajdamaschko, 2004).

**Experiential Learning** - according to Dewey (1938), the theory of experiential learning emphasizes the subjective quality of the student's experience. The student has a direct

encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it.

**Globalization** - is often associated with the interconnectedness among nations of the world and to “the trends and policies related to marketization, increasing supranational competition as well as growth of trans-national education and commercial knowledge transfer” (Teichler, 2004, p.8). The term implies a worldwide process, in which standardization across cultures occurs in technology, migration, and education.

**Global Citizenship** - Global citizenship can be defined as a moral and ethical disposition which can guide the understanding of individuals (students) or groups of local and global contexts, and remind them of their relative responsibilities within various communities. Although no one uniform or commonly accepted definition of global citizenship emerges from the literature, three overarching themes or dimensions of global citizenship are consistently and pervasively noted across the many disparate perspectives. The three dimensions have been identified as 1. social responsibility, 2. global competence, and 3. global civic engagement. These interrelated dimensions align well with the prominent theoretical and philosophical perspectives described in the literature; reflect how governmental entities, associations, and educators have framed global citizenship; and articulate ideas that resonate with the goals of higher education international programs (Schattle, 2009).

**Internship** - can be seen as a class of special programs that bridge the gap between the realities of the world of work and education. They center on the idea of students making real-world application of skills learned in their academic training.

**International Internships** - operate on various work schedules that can incorporate a five, seven, or ten week internship experience. The programs are developed to give students an opportunity to gain internship experience, exposure to an international organization's operations, and sufficient time in country to experience the acculturation process (Furnham & Bockner, 1986).

**Internationalization** - in contrast to globalization, internationalization focuses on the bilateral and/or multilateral process that involve the development of business, social, educational, and cultural relationships in a particular country (McCabe, 2001). Given the continued and inevitable growth of globalization, along with competition in the global workforce and an expansion of multinational operations in and outside of the United States, the internationalization of higher education has become inevitable.

**Study Abroad** - study abroad programs are defined as educational programs that take place outside of the country of origin (NASFA, 2003).

### **Research Design**

It is important for students, faculty, student affairs practitioners, and study abroad educators alike to understand what learning is taking place during international internships in order to promote positive experiences and to appropriately prepare students for the reality of an international internship. To fill this knowledge disparity, this study examines students' understanding during an international internship experience in China

and the ways in which they make meaning of this phenomenon by investigating the following research questions:

1. How do American undergraduate students who participate in an international internship make meaning of their experience?
2. How do American undergraduate students engaged in an international internship make meaning of their cross-cultural competence, attitudes, beliefs, values, and purpose of cross-cultural vocational experience?
3. To what extent does participation in an international internship mediate perceived changes in students' global citizenship, including their views on social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning is the conceptual framework for this study of the lived experience of international internships and global citizenship development among U.S. students interning in China. Internships and study abroad programs both have their theoretical foundations in experiential learning, first developed by John Dewey (1938). Like Dewey, Kolb believed that experiencing something is a linking process between action and thought. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model draws on aspects of Dewey's (1938) learning process, Lewin's (1948) feedback process and Piaget's (1955) cognitive-development process. Kolb's experiential learning model "pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work, and personal development" (Kolb, 1984, p.4).

Kolb postulates that the individual goes through a cyclical learning feedback process consisting of: concrete experience, observation and reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). These stages frame the internship experience. For the purpose of this study, concrete experience is the student participating in an international internship experience in Beijing, China. During the course of the experience, the student observes and reflects on international internship phenomenon in and outside of the classroom. The student subsequently forms new abstract concepts that may inform the internship experience and global citizenship. These concepts are then tested through active experimentation. This process allows the students to make connections between their own world of meaning and a particular profession by gaining hands-on international experience, reflecting on work and meaning with other interns and colleagues, and talking with a mentor/supervisor to enhance their personal growth. Finally this active experimentation results in a process that enlightens and enhances the concrete experience of the student's international internship (Kolb, 1984).

Experiential learning theory emphasizes the experience of the learner, as well as cognitive or behavioral aspects of the learning (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). By understanding the core principles of experiential learning theory, it is possible to comprehend how such activities may be incorporated into the international internship experience and global citizenship. In addition to these learning opportunities, student interns have the unique opportunity to gain work experience in a country which represents the fastest growing economic powerhouse, in terms of growth, in the world today. Considering the rapidly growing importance of the Chinese economy

within the global marketplace, an internship placement with a local or multinational company can add considerable value to students' resume and future career possibilities.

### **Study Design**

In order to examine the phenomenon of American undergraduate student's international internships, I conducted a qualitative multi-case study because this type of research allows for the illustration of a phenomenon through shared "lived experience" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 2). This study attempted to better understand the phenomenon of American undergraduate student's international internship experience by describing, interpreting, and critically examining the lived experiences of currently enrolled American undergraduate students in the China Studies Program.

By utilizing the multiple case study method, I was able to provide detailed accounts of individual students' international internship experiences and then conduct cross-case comparisons. Multiple cases are often preferable to single cases, as the evidence is more compelling (Creswell, 2002). Yin (1994), notes that case study methodology is a favored strategy when investigating a phenomenon within a real-life context. This manner of research closely examines a phenomenon over a period of time using multiple methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis (Yeh & Inman, 2007). The design of this study included a discussion of the data sources used, methods for data collection and analysis, and the underlying assumptions of the research.

Study participants came from a New England Private Selective University (NEPSU) in the United States to study at a National University located in China (NUC).

These institutions were selected as study sites because they coordinate a joint study abroad program with an international internship experience and allowed access to 20 enrolled students in the program. Participants for this study were students from NEPSU who interned through the China Studies Program at NUC. All 20 NEPSU students who were enrolled in the Chinese Studies Program in Spring 2013 were invited to participate with the goal of at least six participants.

This study utilized a series of interviews with each participant as the primary method of data collection. Interviews provided a richer, more descriptive data than a simple survey with open ended questions (Rossman & Rollis, 2003). Document analysis was employed to investigate students' decisions being made and aligned with resources provided in the international internship experience. The study of material culture is an important facet of data collection. The process allows one to investigate multiple tenets of the phenomenon and the interactions taking place to understand the interviewees (Hodder, 1994). Finally, in order to better understand undergraduate student's international internship experiences, the researcher observed the participants in Beijing, China in their internship environment. These observations helped interpret events in the internship, students' behaviors as members of the Chinese work culture, and informal patterns of interactions among participants.

### **Outline of Chapters**

This first chapter gave a brief introduction and overview of the study, stated its key research questions, and discussed the purpose and justification of the study. It also



presented a brief overview of the background and an assessment of the current state of international internship research to give context for this study.

Chapter two provides an in-depth overview of relevant research, specifically reviewing existing experiential learning, internships, study abroad and international internship literature. The chapter also reviews important research related to global citizenship in the attempt to understand and operationalize the construct. Based on insights drawn from the literature, the chapter concludes with an illustration and discussion of the research model that underpins study.

In chapter three, the methodology of the study is described in detail, beginning with a description of the case study design and continuing with a description of the methodology employed to conduct the analysis. It explains the research design, population and sample, variables of interest, data collection procedures, and approaches to data analysis. The chapter also briefly outlines the limitations of the study.

Chapter four provides a thorough review of the Chinese Studies Program Cohort background and overview of the participants' international internship placements. The purpose of chapter four is to provide the reader an in-depth understanding of the participants' international internship experience.

Chapter five discusses the results of this study. I have organized this chapter according to the phases and chronology (pre-departure, in-country, re-entry, and post-study) of the Chinese Study Program in Beijing China. This organization allows for the participants' perspectives to evolve, from pre-departure to post-study, just as they did during the actual data collection process. Finally, chapter six offers a thorough discussion

of the findings of this study, study limitations, and implications for practice and future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

In order to understand students' experiences in international internships, it is important to review the foundations of international internships through an analysis of experiential learning theory. Because few researchers have examined international internships, important historical tenets and experiential learning models that shape the foundation of this phenomenon will also be addressed including: internships; globalization and internationalization of American higher education; study abroad; international internships; and global citizenship. Through this discussion, I show how these different experiential learning models inform the development and progression of international internships in American higher education and the student internship experience. The literature review concludes by summarizing the state of knowledge about the phenomenon of international internships and ways this study will address the knowledge gap.

### **Experiential Learning**

An overview of the rich history of experiential education provides a basis for the nature and value of learning through experience that is found in internships. Since the writings of Aristotle in 300 BC, direct experience has been heralded as a component of learning (Dyer & Schumann, 1993). Aristotle once said, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing" (Bynum & Porter, 2005, p. 3). Aristotle's quote emphasizes the fact that experiential education has been a part of the human experience for thousands of years; however, it is relatively new to higher education.

Except for well established medical and applied professions, learning by doing was not a commonly used educational methodology in formal schooling until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Zanville and Markwood (1982) noted that as far back as the Middle Ages, advanced training for entry level professions included vocational education in the guilds through apprenticeships. These apprenticeships found their way to the United States in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century. As the industrial revolution of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century took hold, the relationship between higher education and the world of work changed. The new technologies of the industrial revolution required specialized. Factories came to dominate industrial life so rapidly that it became difficult to transmit skills from one generation of workers to the next through the apprenticeship system (Dyer & Schumann, 1993).

With the establishment of land-grant colleges under the Morrill Act of 1862, American higher education blended the model of practical experience along with the traditional theoretical model. The Morrill Act of 1862 provided over 17 million acres of public lands for the establishment of agricultural and mechanical colleges to serve the vocational aspirations of a growing middle-class (Dyer & Schumann, 1993). One institution of higher education that was founded as a result of the Morrill Act was Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. It was the wish of Ezra Cornell to found an institution where students could gain practical experience in any study (Zanville & Markwood, 1982).

Internships first appeared in the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland was the first institution of higher education to import internships from Europe as a means of strengthening the curriculum for

physicians (Houle, 1976). In 1906 the University of Cincinnati established a cooperative education (Co-op) model for engineering students. Building on this work, Abraham Flexner issued the 1910 Report (also called Carnegie Foundation Bulletin Number Four), which used Johns Hopkins University as a model of medical education. The popularity of the Hopkins curriculum, which included internships, began to spread to other institutions. As a result, universities and colleges established internship programs in social work, hospital administration, and public policy which tailored the concept to meet the future training needs of students (Houle, 1976; Zanville & Markwood, 1982).

Over the last one hundred years, four events have had an impact on internships in American higher education. First, professors have added a practical focus, such as the internship, to previously classroom-only instruction (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Second, Flexner's report was used to justify the extension of the apprenticeship system which had for centuries operated outside of the university system and formalized it by placing its activities in higher education through the internship experience (Houle, 1976). Third, American higher education extended beyond the elite beginning in 1945 when veterans returning from World War II flooded college campuses through the G.I. Bill. This flood of students marked the beginning of mass education, which created opportunities for institutions and academic disciplines to customize the curriculum to meet the needs of students and the career requirements of the post-war economy (Dyer & Schumann, 1993). Fourth, selected institutions of higher education like Antioch, Northeastern, Sarah Lawrence, and Rollins revolutionized their curricula by devoting their missions to experiential learning programs (Houle, 1976). In addition to these events, the changes in nature of the United States economy means that increasing numbers of Americans view a

college degree as a means to prepare for the world of work and to attain a higher social economic status. Coupled with these factors is the rising cost of higher education and the pressure on universities and colleges to provide solid evidence of the learning taking place in the classroom. Stakeholders such as students, parents, and employers want to know if a college education will prepare students for success in the world of work. Internships offer one way for students to apply what they learned in the classroom to professional labor markets and improve their preparation for the initial entry-level jobs once they graduate (Dyer & Schumann, 1993)

It is clear from an historical perspective that internships have become a valuable experience by which American college students prepare themselves for the world of work and future careers. As internships have gained popularity in American higher education, academic departments have designed structured for-credit internship programs. Research on academic internship programs indicates that approximately 90 percent of universities and colleges offer students some type of for-credit internship or work-related learning experience (Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2000; Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). This interest in internships appears to be continuously growing. The current incarnation of internships echoes its historical roots in apprenticeships and recurring experiments in practical post-secondary education along with strands of learning by doing. The evolving nature of internships demonstrates how they have become a popular mechanism for complementing the academic curriculum and adjusting the career experience of students to the market requirements of the modern workplace (Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2000).

## **Experiential Learning Theory Development and Definitions**

Experiential learning theory is considered by researchers and practitioners alike to be the foundation for internships, study abroad, and international internship experiences. As such, it is important to provide a historical perspective of experiential learning theory. The theoretical framework for experiential learning began to take shape in the early 1900s (Chickering, 1977; Houle, 1976).

The genesis of the experiential learning movement can be traced to John Dewey. In *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey began a new philosophy of education emphasizing the freedom of the learner. Dewey set out to define what this freedom actually meant and how it could be realized. He believed that “the kind of external imposition which was so common in the traditional school limited rather than promoted the intellectual and moral development of the young” (Dewey, 1938, p. 22).

Dewey’s pivotal work, often credited with American higher education’s acceptance of experiential education, rejuvenated the university curriculum, thus tying the concepts of education and hands-on experience (Dewey, 1960). His work laid the foundation for Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). Kolb extended and tied his predecessors’ concepts together into a cohesive framework that now provides the modern foundation of experiential learning and internships. Kolb also took the ideas of experiential learning out of the realm of academia and directly applied the idea to specific occupational areas of education such as business and engineering (Kolb, 1984). The next section will describe in detail Kolb’s Model of Experiential Learning.

### **Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning**

Following Dewey, the most cited experiential learning theorist is David Kolb. Kolb's (1984) Model of Experiential Learning draws on aspects of Dewey's (1938) learning process, Lewin's (1948) feedback process and Piaget's (1955) cognitive-development process. Kolb's experiential learning model "pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work, and personal development" (Kolb, 1984, p.4). According to Kolb, knowledge is continually gained through both personal and environmental experiences. To acquire knowledge from an experience, certain abilities are required. First, the learner must be willing to be actively involved in the experience. Second, the learner must be able to reflect on the experience. Third, the learner must possess and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience. Fourth and finally, the learner must possess decision making and problem solving skills in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience. As a result, learning takes place through the progression whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984).

Kolb postulates that the learning process is cyclical and ongoing in which the student goes through a feedback process involving: 1) concrete experience; 2) observation and reflection; 3) formation of abstract concepts and generalizations; and 4) testing implications of concepts in new situations through active experimentation. This feedback process in turn can inform and evolve the internship experience. For the purpose of this study, the concrete experience is the student participating in an international internship experience in Beijing, China. During the course of the



experience, the student observes and reflects on the international internship in and outside of the classroom. The student subsequently forms new abstract concepts that may enlighten the internship experience and global citizenship. These concepts are then tested through active experimentation. This process allows students to make connections between their own world of meaning and a particular profession by gaining hands-on international experience, reflecting on work and meaning alone and with other interns and colleagues, and talking with a mentor/supervisor to enhance their personal growth. Finally this active experimentation results in the feedback process coming full circle to enlighten and enhance the original concrete experience of the student's international internship and global citizenship. Thus learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984).

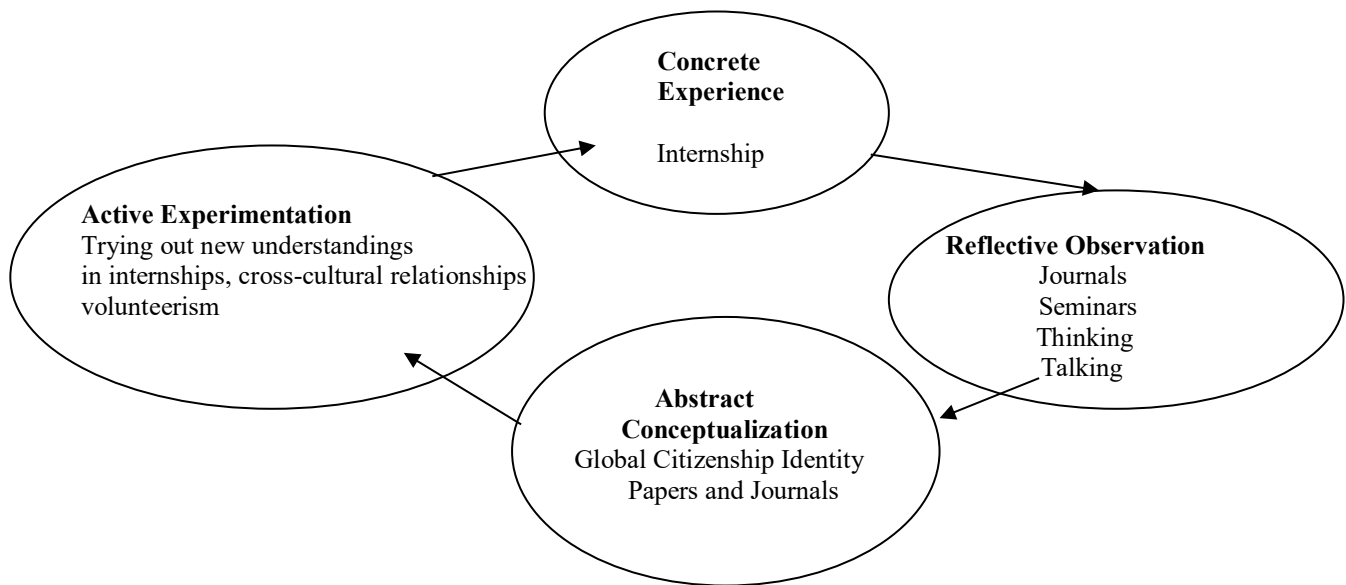


Figure 1. Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning (1984)

Experiential learning emphasizes the experience of the learner, as well as cognitive or behavioral aspects of the learning (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). By

understanding the core principles of experiential learning theory, it is possible to comprehend how such activities may be incorporated into the international internship experience.

### **Internships as Experiential Learning**

So where do “internships” fit into experiential learning? Experiential learning can be seen as an umbrella term for numerous educational practices in higher education such as internships, study abroad, independent study, service learning, and international internships. In a study of internship programs at universities and colleges, Zanville and Markwood (1982) found that internships are characterized by several components which have become a commonly used framework in many internship programs. First, the internship experience is focused on the development of the student. Second, the internship provides a means for students to engage in a process of career exploration. Third, there is an educational/learning component to the internship, even though the student may not actually earn academic credit for the internship. Fourth, internships should take place in a structured work environment. Fifth and finally, internships develop skills, abilities, and knowledge that may lead to a professional work experience upon completion of the internship. However, employment is not necessarily guaranteed with the internship employer but may be seen as a resume builder that could lead to future employment (Zanville & Markwood, 1982).

Students take part in internships to increase their marketability in a competitive job market (Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2000). The internship experience allows them the opportunity to learn new skills and develop personal and professional interests. Students

may also expand their personal network and make connections (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Finally, an internship experience provides the student the opportunity to meet people currently working in the career field, and gain valuable work references, as well as getting exposure to the working environment (Cook, et al., 2000; Furco, 1996). These are all good reasons for students to consider doing one or more internships during their college experience (Zanville & Markwood, 1982; Furco, 1996; Howard, 2004).

During an internship, the primary intended beneficiary is the student and the focus of the service activity is on student learning. Students are placed in internships to acquire skills and knowledge that will enhance their academic learning and career development. For many students, internships are incorporated into their academic experience and performed in addition to regular course work (Kolb, 1984). Internships may be paid or unpaid and take place in either for-profit or non-profit organizations (Furco, 1996).

When analyzing internships through the lens of Kolb's (1984) Model of Experiential Learning, the primary motivation for students is learning in a new context. However, the learning is not linear. Indeed, Kolb (1984), defines learning as the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experiences. Experiential Learning is both the process of creating and assimilating information, relearning information, and building upon previous knowledge to generate more and refined knowledge. Kolb (1984) implies the cyclical nature of experiences, observation, reflection, and abstract testing that allows students to enter the learning process at any stage. The next segment of this review will build on these definitions of internships and place them in the context of higher education.

## **Internships in Higher Education**

Recent data show that undergraduate students in American higher education are becoming more aware of the importance of incorporating internships in their academic experience. In 2008, the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that 50 percent of graduating students had participated in an internship experience, up from 17 percent shown in a 1992 study by Northwestern University (NACE, 2008). This means hundreds of thousands of students take part in internships each year. Coupled with these data is the fact that the United States is experiencing a skill recession (Alssid, 2010). The gap between higher education and the training of the American workforce and the demand for qualified persons to be available in the emerging economy is growing (Alssid, 2010). This places American higher education in a unique leadership position to prepare college students for the world of work in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This research also implies that an internship experience is viewed by students as not just an opportunity but a necessity. In fact, it has become a common occurrence for highly motivated students to have several internship experiences during their college career (Brown, 2004; NSEE, 2009).

An internship experience can crystallize students' understanding of their chosen academic discipline and ease the transition from classroom to workplace. The combination of career clarity, job-related self-confidence, and decreased anxiety about career choice are reported as significant benefits for interns (Jernstedt, 1995). Another benefit of the internship experience is access to informal job sources and networking. Stone and McLaren (1999) studied 351 student interns from 12 different colleges and universities over a ten-year period. They found students who had completed an internship

were more apt to obtain employment than those who had not completed an internship. During an internship experience, professionals may share agency contacts for possible job leads for interns (Stone & McLaren, 1999). Recruiters have also reported that students who have completed an internship are more qualified than those who have not. Students who participated in the study stated that their internship was the single most significant factor in their educational experience. As a result, the authors concluded that internships are a significant part of the undergraduate learning experience (Brookes & Greene, 1998; Stone & McLaren, 1999).

### **Globalization and Internationalization of American Higher Education**

The underlying mission of American higher education is to prepare students to be productive members of a democratic citizenry and serve the common good (Bok, 2006). Universities and colleges have traditionally shared in the common objective to prepare undergraduates to live, work, and contribute to society and the nation as a whole. The campus environment offers an opportunity in which educators prepare students to be effective citizens in a democratic society (Gurin & Hurtado, 2000). However, the mission of higher education has begun to broaden beyond national citizenship (De Wit, 2002). This change is due in part to the political, economic, and environmental changes taking place over the last twenty years. While these changes have been occurring, technological advances in the areas of communication have also been made. Due to developments such as the growth of the Internet, nations throughout the world are now in much closer contact with one another. It is no longer possible nor necessarily beneficial for countries and institutions of higher education to remain isolated in this new global society

(Deardorf, 2006). Because of these and related societal changes, today's graduates need to be intellectually resilient, interculturally competent, and prepared for a future of life-long learning. Understanding and effectively navigating other societies and cultures is no longer a matter of choice but has become essential for working and living successfully in a globalizing world.

Globalization is often associated with the interconnectedness among nations of the world and to “the trends and policies related to marketization, increasing supranational competition as well as growth of trans-national education and commercial knowledge transfer” (Teichler, 2004, p.8). The term implies a worldwide process, in which standardization across cultures occurs in technology, migration, and education. Altbach and Knight (2007) defined globalization “as the economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect education in the contemporary world” (pp. 25-26). These phenomena include information technology, scientific communication, and mass demand for higher education. In contrast to globalization, internationalization focuses on the bilateral and/or multilateral process that involves the development of business, social, educational, and cultural relationships across countries (McCabe, 2001). In higher education, internationalization typically refers to specific policies and programs undertaken by governments, academic systems, and institutions to facilitate student or faculty exchanges, engage in collaborative research overseas and offer international academic programs or experiences (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Increasing numbers of American institutions have begun to explore ways to further internationalize their campuses and undergraduate curriculum (Brustein, 2007). These perspectives on internationalization suggest that students' experiences across

countries of the world are needed to develop the competence to succeed in the global environment. In response, a 2008 American Council on Education report, *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses*, found increasing numbers of American higher education institutions have identified different strategies to plan for internationalization. These strategies range from explicitly mentioning internationalization in their mission statements and strategic plans, to developing study abroad and international internship programs, and internationalizing the academic curriculum to encourage student exchanges (Green, Luu, & Burris, 2008; Qiang, 2003; Teichler, 2004). The concept of global citizenship is prominent in the language used to prioritize the internationalization of higher education and the undergraduate experience. Although there is little agreement on how to define global citizenship or how to measure it as an outcome of higher education, many agree that producing global citizens has become central to the many goals of contemporary higher education (Langran, Langran, & Ozment, 2009). Thus, transforming U.S. colleges and universities into global institutions that educate for global citizenship has emerged as one of the leading demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Belamy & Weinberg, 2006; Brustein, 2007; Stearns, 2009).

The National Association for Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) (2003) strongly supports the argument that international and cross cultural awareness and understanding on the part of U.S. students is crucial to effective U.S. leadership, competitiveness, prosperity, and national security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In spite of the importance of international awareness and understanding on part of the U.S. students, NASFA (2003) reports that “the United States effectively lacks a coherent, clearly articulated, proactive policy for imparting effective global literacy to our people as an integral part of their

education and for reaching out to future foreign leaders through education and exchange” (NASFA, 2003, p.6). In an effort to address the lack of global competence, the report of NASFA’s Strategic Task Force on Education Board (2003) proposed a national effort to promote study abroad as an experience during which “Americans will gain an understanding of other countries, regions, languages, and cultures, through direct personal experience” (NASFA, 2003, p.6).

### **Study Abroad**

One avenue that students have to expand their international and cultural awareness is through participation in study abroad. For nearly two centuries, undergraduate students from the United States have embarked on international experiences to study and live abroad. As such, they are making a commitment to leave their home culture for a period of time to engage in academic and social pursuits in a new context or setting (Anderson et al., 2006). The experience becomes an academic, cultural, intellectual, and emotional journey, during which time the student is afforded the opportunity to interact with people of a different culture in ways students may never have experienced before. One of the most common forms of international experience for American college students is study abroad. Study abroad programs are defined as educational programs that take place outside of the student’s country of origin (NASFA, 2003).

The latest statistical report, *Open Doors*, published by the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2016), indicates that study abroad participation has grown steadily in the past 20 years from 84,403 in 1995-1996 to 241,971 in 2015-2016. The



latest 2016 figures reflect an increase of about eight and half percent to 270,604 students. This increasing trend is expected to continue (NAFSA, 2016). Traditionally, U.S. college students participate in study abroad programs to experience immersion in the host culture and gain proficiency in a foreign language. However, participation in other types of programs including international internships and short term programs is gaining in popularity with students (ACE, 2001; ACE, 2008; NAFSA, 2011; IIE, 2016).

Overall, the trend in study abroad has evolved from a prevailing view of traveling overseas for a well-rounded education to a current view that students should be prepared to meet the challenges of the interrelated and interconnected global society (Hoffa, 1996; IIE, 2016). In an effort to face this challenge, many institutions of higher education have made study abroad a part of their mission. Institutions have also incorporated specific guidelines for their international programs to determine the goals and learning outcomes of study abroad in order to maximize the benefit of the learning from the experience (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990; Gillipsie, 2002; McCabe, 2001).

It is worth noting study abroad in this literature review because a growing number of U.S. students are incorporating international internships into their study abroad experience. According to the most recent *Open Doors Report 2016*, there has been a 37 percent increase in the number of American college students participating in a practical working experiences as part of their study abroad program, with 18,715 students now receiving academic credit at a U.S. college or university for an international internship. Furthermore, it has been estimated that 50,000 American college students

participate in international internships annually (Rubin, 2009). This estimate is equal to 19% of the total annual study abroad enrollment (IIE, 2016).

### **International Internships**

The international internship offers students a unique global experiential learning perspective, while maintaining the same benefits students would expect to find in a domestic internship back in the United States. These benefits include the chance to try out a career, the opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice, the experience of learning by doing, exposure to a professional culture and work habits, and the chance to make valuable personal and professional networking contacts. Research suggest that professionals view an international internship experience as being at least as important as foreign-language training, in terms of the skills and knowledge that a person should possess to be successful in an international professional (Lundstrom, White, & Schuster, 1996; Rubin, 2009). The term international internship is used in this dissertation exclusively to refer to an internship which is accomplished outside of a student's home country (Adler & Loughrin-Sacco, 2002).

The types of international internships as well as international organizations that support such experiences differ widely. According to a review of international internships conducted by Transitions Abroad in collaboration with the International Center at the University of Michigan, Nelson (1995) found that international internships can be placed into three separate categories: 1) study abroad internships; 2) internship exchange/work permit programs; and 3) internships directly with international organizations.

### **Study Abroad Internships**

Study Abroad Internships include hundreds of overseas internships which are sponsored by universities and colleges for undergraduate students seeking to incorporate an international internship with a study abroad experience. Advantages for students include institutional support and student services, academic credit, applicability of financial aid, and a variety of subjects and locations. Disadvantages are high cost and sometimes unpredictability of placement (Nelson, 1995).

### **Internship Exchange/Work Permit Programs**

Internship Exchange/Work Permit Programs include reciprocal exchange programs offering internships in applied fields. There are a number of international organizations that facilitate the process for students as well as assisting in obtaining work permits. A sample of some of these international organizations include the Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales (AIESEC), a student-run international organization with chapters on many campuses, offering international internships open to all majors in 100 countries. The mission of AIESEC is to develop leadership capabilities through internal leadership programs and to engage students and graduates in international student exchange and internship programs in for-profit and non-profit organizations (Nelson, 1995).

Another example is the British University North American Club (BUNAC) which organizes work and internship abroad programs. BUNAC programs are available in Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The goal of this international organization is to encourage interest in Canada, Mexico, and the United States of America among students at British universities and colleges and interest in

Britain among students at universities and colleges in the aforementioned countries, leading to a better understanding among students from different nations, and generally to promote the advancement of learning and education of students (BUNAC, 2012; Nelson, 1995).

### **Internships Directly with International Organizations**

There are a number of organizations in international sectors that offer internship programs with a centralized formal application process. In general, the larger and better-known the organization, the more competitive the application process for internships. Smaller and more locally-based organizations, often overlooked by applicants, may offer some of the best internship experiences. The first example of this type of smaller and more locally based program is the United States Government. The U.S. Department of State and other federal agencies have offices overseas and in the U.S. offer internships for undergraduates and graduate students (NAFSA 2011; Nelson, 1995).

Multinational organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank offer international internships as well. They are often unpaid and highly competitive (paid positions are usually reserved for graduate students). Students can also find international internships with private enterprises. Global organizations such as Proctor & Gamble, Coca-Cola, and IBM have well designed international internship programs (Nelson, 1995; Open Doors, 2011).

Non-government organizations (NGOs), including humanitarian or human-rights watchdogs like Amnesty International, health care providers like CARE, research institutes like the Bermuda Biological Station, and organizations supporting international educational exchange such as the Institute of International Education also have

international internships. NGOs typically welcome interns in their U.S.-based offices and sometimes by direct application to overseas offices. Internships with NGOs are often unpaid. Finally, private voluntary organizations (PVOs) offer many overseas internship placements and are one of the only possibilities for interning in developing countries. Positions are typically designated as "volunteer" or service positions, rather than internships. These service positions can be found in secular organizations, such as Amigos de las Americas or WorldTeach, and in religious-sponsored groups. While some religious groups insist on affiliation, others, such as the Brethren or the American Friend Service Committee, do not. Short-term placements (of less than one year) will often charge fees, or at best provide room and board. A few long-term placements, most notably the Peace Corps, provide for all the expenses of the volunteer. The Peace Corps is a U.S. government program which funds positions with host-country voluntary organizations (NASFA, 2011; Nelson, 1995).

Despite organizations' provision of positions, most undergraduates arrange international internships on their own. These self-developed opportunities take initiative but also allow for flexibility in the experience. Students conduct the required research on their own, contact local organizations in the host country of their choice and set up opportunities (Nelson, 1995; Open Doors, 2011).

Although there are well developed international internship models and increasing numbers of students are seeking out international internship opportunities, there is surprisingly little research on this topic. Toncar and Cudmore (2000) conducted a study on international internship programs administered by American higher education institutions. The authors found that creativity is required when developing and

coordinating international internships for students. The structure of international internship programs can range from two-to-three week study tours, internship programs of varying duration, to an entire academic year abroad with an internship component. For international internship programs that operate on the short or long duration model, work schedules can vary from five, seven, or ten week internship experiences. The programs are developed to give students an opportunity to gain internship experience, exposure to an international organization's operations, and sufficient time in country to experience the acculturation process (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000).

Evanson and Zust (2004) conducted an international study with nine nursing students who volunteered during spring break to provide nursing service in a rural, poor area of Guatemala. The students were involved in all aspects of planning and preparation for the international experience. All nine students participated in a qualitative study which sought to describe the meaning of participation in an international service experience among baccalaureate nursing students. Data were collected through reflection journals, evening group conversations in Guatemala, written narratives, and a post-experience focus group interview. Six themes were uncovered using content analysis: 1) clarification of career path/goals, 2) improved understanding of social justice and globalization issues, 3) motivation to continue service work, 4) discovering the reciprocity of relationships with others, 5) appreciation for the whole person, and 6) finding a way to respect the sacredness of the experience. This study lends support for the positive benefits of short-term international experiences for nursing students and may have some implications for longer international internship experiences (Evanson & Zust, 2004).

Benedict-Augustin (2010) conducted a study of 15 students from Cornell University and the University of Pennsylvania who participated in international internships. The purpose of the study was to look at the impact these experiences have on the student's career development. The study focused on the reasons students pursue international internships and how they make meaning of the experience. The author's research showed that students pursue international internships to gain knowledge, both experimental and global, as well as to advance their career development by gaining or improving skills, clarifying career related interest, and/or clarifying or fulfilling work-related values. All of the students stated that they had meaningful experiences that provided significant opportunities for learning and personal growth. Finally, the majority of participants showed evidence of global learning from the international internship. One of the recommendations of this study was to ensure that students have structured opportunities to reflect on the impact of their international internships (Benedict-Augustin, 2010; Hopkins, 1999)

### **Global Citizenship**

In response to the push to prioritize internationalization in higher education, American colleges and universities have been developing a broad range of activities and programs in global competence and international education including international curriculum development, study abroad programs, and international internships. However, many American universities and colleges do not have a global citizenship strategy for the entire institution. As a result, international education, and global citizenship in particular, are fragmented in many American higher education institutions

(Altbach, 2007; De Wit, 2002). This deficit leaves American students and graduates with an unchallenged view of the world. Internationalization of the curriculum is a vital component of generating a new paradigm of global competence. This means American institutions of higher education should encourage faculty and students to develop the competencies and values to be globally engaged citizens (ACE/CIE, 2009; Teichler, 2004).

Immanuel Kant invoked *The Law of World Citizenship* in his 1795 essay, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch.” Kant argued that as people of distant parts of the world come into contact with each other, the human race will gradually be brought closer to a constitution establishing world citizenship. For Kant, the idea of world citizenship was essential for the maintenance of human rights and peace in the world. The idea that citizenship can transcend national boundaries has since been expanded and further elaborated upon by scholars alike, including Albert Einstein, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Falk, and John Urry (Falk, & Kanach, 2000).

The leading theorist in global citizenship is Martha Nussbaum, who is also a strong advocate of its place in higher education. She identifies three competencies necessary for global citizenship: self-awareness, interconnectedness, and narrative imagination (McKeown, 2009; Nussbaum, 2002). Schattle (2009) draws upon Nussbaum’s work and believes there are three primary concepts underlying global citizenship. The first like Nussbaum’s is awareness (direct experience). The second is responsibility, where global citizens are aware of their decisions and the impact on others (reflective observation/abstract conceptualization). The third and final concept is participation (active experimentation), which involves contributing to the life of a community.



Through participation in the experience, the global citizen transcends cross-cultural experiences (international internships), political views, and economic realities to provide a new framework for personal growth that imprints on the individual's life narrative (Nussbaum, 2002; Schattle, 2009).

Converging ideas within the contemporary global citizenship discourse are related to responsibility, awareness, and participation (Schattle, 2009). Although no uniform or commonly accepted definition of global citizenship emerges from the literature, three overarching themes or dimensions of global citizenship are consistently noted across the many disparate perspectives. The three dimensions have been identified as 1) social responsibility; 2) global competence; and 3) global civic engagement. These interrelated dimensions align well with the prominent theoretical and philosophical perspectives described in the literature.

Although there has been no direct connection to international internships, one of the driving forces behind the growth of international education has been the assumption that through studying abroad students become global citizens (Fugate & Jefferson, 2001). This assumption hinges on the basic argument that participation in study abroad offers a life changing, transformative experience that broadens horizons and bestows the professional and intellectual elements of global citizenship upon the student (Nussbaum, 2002; Schattle, 2009). Together, however, this diverse and complex research base builds a strong foundation on which to further examine the global citizenship outcomes of international internships.

Even if American institutions of higher education succeed in developing a more integrated and accepted international curriculum, the focus on global citizenship is likely

to fall short if they do not bridge the gap between learning and participation. There needs to be experiential components to an international program of study (Nussbaum, 2002; Schattle, 2009). This could involve sending students out into the world as part of their education and preparation to become global citizens through international internships.

### **Career Development**

In growing numbers American undergraduate college students report that one of the reasons they attend colleges/universities is to prepare for the world of work. This revelation adds to the understanding that career development lies at the intersection of experiential learning, international internships, study abroad, and global learning (Benedict-Augustine, 2010).

Research on the characteristics of career indecision is voluminous and spans over 80 years. As discussed by Gordon (2007a, 2007b), variables studied in relation to career indecision include personality traits, psychological factors (e.g., locus of control and identity), decision making, avoidance behavior, social and moral attitudes, risk-taking, anxiety, and cross-cultural differences. Whereas early frameworks sought to provide a dichotomy between career decision and indecision, models have now moved to a multidimensional continuum (Savickas, 2013). Undecided students are often placed along this multidimensional continuum of career decision-indecision in combination with other characteristics. The findings from a number of these studies (Anderson, Boud, & Cohen, 1989; Fuqua & Hartman, 1983) provide invaluable information on understanding undecided students and, for the career counselors or study abroad advisor, the most relevant findings are those which cluster characteristics of the undecided students into

subtypes/ These subtypes provide career counselors and study abroad advisors with a framework through which to understand students and provide appropriate interventions.

The research of Savickas and Jarjoura (1991) sought to use cluster analysis to move forward trait identification to identify types of undecided students. Of the five types identified, the first three deal with career development task associated with exploration including internships. The final two types focus more on problems that impede a person's ability to work through career decision-making task.

Students who are implementing are those who typically identified as decided students. They report no problems with career decision making, have an occupational objective in mind, and appear to be moving forward on implementing career plans. Students who are specifying choice through advanced exploration have identified a preference for an occupational field and are looking for additional information on careers related to their major, how to choose between career alternatives, or how to implement their career choice. In the third type, crystallizing a preference through broad exploration, students need more knowledge about themselves and the world of work so they can determine a career choice. Internships and study abroad experiences are examples of activities that provide advance exploration and additional information on careers. Students who are unrealistic or learning to compromise are blocked by the pressure of trying to choose the perfect choice from among multiple career choice. Finally, students who are indecisive or learning to make decisions are experiencing high levels of anxiety and are overwhelmed by the career decision-making process.

Savickas' (2013) Career Construction theory provides a way of thinking about how individuals choose and use work. The theory presents a model for comprehending vocational behavior across the life-cycle as well as methods and materials that career counselors use to help clients make vocational choices and maintain successful and satisfying work lives. It seeks to be comprehensive in its purview by taking three perspectives on vocational behavior: the differential, developmental, and dynamic. From the perspective of individual differences psychology, it examines the content of vocational personality types and what different people prefer to do. From the perspective of developmental psychology, it examines the process of psychosocial adaptation and how individuals cope with vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas. From the perspective of narrative psychology, it examines the dynamics by which life themes impose meaning on vocational behavior and why individuals fit work into their lives in distinct ways. In coordination, the three perspectives enable career counselors and researchers to survey how individuals construct their careers by using life themes to integrate the self-organization of personality and the self-extension of career adaptability into a self-defining whole that animates work, directs occupational choice, and shapes vocational adjustment (Savickas, 2013).

Career construction theory responds to the needs of today's mobile/generation next workers who may feel fragmented and confused as they encounter a restructuring of occupations, transformation of the labor force, and multicultural imperatives. This fundamental reshaping of the world of work is making it increasingly difficult to comprehend careers with just person-environment and vocational development models that emphasize commitment and stability rather than flexibility and mobility. The new

job market in our unsettled economy calls for viewing career not as a lifetime commitment to one employer but as selling services and skills to a series of employers who need projects completed. In negotiating each new project, the prospective employee usually concentrates on salary yet also seeks to make the work meaningful, control the work environment, balance work-family responsibilities, and train for the next job (Savickas, 2013).

Simply stated, career construction theory, holds that individuals build their careers by imposing meaning on vocational behavior (Savickas, 2013). Personality types and developmental transitions deal with what a person has done and how they have done it. However, they do not address the question of why they do what they do, nor do they focus on the spirit that animates nor the values that guide the choices and adjustments that build a career. Thus, career construction theory emphasizes the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals impose meaning and direction on their vocational behavior. It uses social constructionism as a meta-theory with which to reconceptualize vocational personality types and vocational development tasks as processes that have possibilities. From a constructionist viewpoint, career, or more precisely subjective career, denotes a moving perspective that imposes personal meaning on past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by weaving them into a pattern that portrays a life theme. Thus, the subjective career that guides, regulates, and sustains vocational behavior emerges from an active process of making meaning, not discovering preexisting facts (Savickas, 2013).

The life theme component of career construction theory addresses the subject matter of work life and focuses on the why of vocational behavior. Career stories reveal the themes that individuals use to make meaningful choices and adjust to work roles. By dealing with the why of life themes along with the what of personality types and the how of career adaptability, career construction seeks to be comprehensive in its purview (Savickas, 2013). Although the content of personality and process of adaptation are both important, studying vocational personality and career adaptability as separate variables misses the dynamics that integrate personality and adaptability into a self-defined whole. The essential meaning of a career, and the dynamics of its construction, are revealed in self-defining stories about the vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas that an individual has faced. In chronicling the recursive interplay between self and society, career stories explain why individuals make the choices that they do and the private meaning that guides these choices. From these prototypical stories about work life, career counselors attempt to comprehend the life themes that construct careers and understand the motives and meaning that pattern work life (Savickas, 2013).

Career construction theory asserts that vocational personality types and occupational interests are simply resemblances to socially-constructed clusters of attitudes and skills. They have no reality or truth value outside themselves because they depend on the social constructions of time, place and culture that support them. Regulated similarities in work environments produce vocational personality types and occupational groups from among individuals with heterogeneous potentials. Thus, career construction theory regards vocational personality types and occupational interests as relational phenomena that reflect emergent and socially-constituted meanings. For this

reason, career construction theory views vocational personality as an individual's reputation among a group of people. Accordingly, the theory concentrates on what individuals can become in doing work, not what they are before they go to work. Work, as a context for human development, provides the outer form of something intensely private; it is the bridge between public and private. Crossing the bridge between self and society is called adaptation (Savickas, 2013). .

In considering adaptability, career construction theory highlights a set of specific attitudes, beliefs, and competencies – the ABCs of career construction-- which shape the actual problem-solving strategies and coping behaviors that individuals use to synthesize their vocational self-concepts with work roles. The ABCs are grouped into four dimensions of adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Thus, the adaptive individual is conceptualized as 1. becoming concerned about the vocational future, 2. increasing personal control over one's vocational future, 3. displaying curiosity by exploring possible selves and future scenarios, and 4. strengthening the confidence to pursue one's aspirations. Increasing a client's career adaptability is a central goal in the goal of career construction counseling (Savickas, 2013).

It is critical that neither the career counselor nor the client view the career stories as determining the future; instead, they should view storying as an active attempt at making meaning and shaping the future. The stories guide adaptation by evaluating opportunities and constraints as well as by using vocational personality traits to address tasks, transitions, and traumas (Savickas, 2015). In telling their stories, clients are remembering the past in a way that constructs a possible future. Clients seem to tell

counselors the stories that they themselves need to hear; from all their available stories, they narrate those stories that support current goals and inspire action. Rather than reporting historical facts, individuals reconstruct the past so that prior events support current choices and lay the groundwork for future moves. This narrative truth often differs from historical truth because it fictionalizes the past in order to preserve dispositional continuity and coherence in the face of psychosocial change (Savickas, 2014).

In attempting to discern the life theme while listening to an individual's career stories, career counselors and study abroad advisors can become disoriented by the numerous particulars of a life. To prevent becoming confused by a client's complexities and contradictions, they can listen not for the facts but for the glue that holds the facts together as they try to hear the theme or secret that makes a whole of the life. Arranging the seemingly random actions and incidents reported in career stories into a plot can be done in many ways. Career construction theory proposes for this purpose that the listener try to hear the quintessence of the stories a client tells. Career counselors and researchers approach this task by assuming that the archetypal theme of career construction involves turning a personal preoccupation into a public occupation. As they listen to a client narrate his or her stories, they concentrate on identifying and understanding his or her personal paradigm for turning essence into interest, tension into intention, and obsession into profession. The progress narrative in the 20<sup>th</sup> century career model that told about climbing the occupational ladder is thus transformed into a progress narrative that tells how individuals can use work to actively master what they have passively suffered and thus move from a felt minus to a perceived plus. Thus, in its counseling application,



career construction theory assists clients to fully inhabit their lives and become more complete as they sustain themselves and contribute to their communities.

Evidence exist that college students become clearer about their career plans after participating in an internship (Brookes & Greene, 1998, p.81). Students seem to gain a new perspective on their coursework. In addition, they often develop a sense of confidence that was not apparent prior to the internship experience. Rubin (2009) discuss the importance of career related work internship experiences as vital to the career exploration process. Further benefits of participation in a career-related internship include smoother entry into full-time employment after graduation as well as better job prospects (Rubin, 2009).

One of the more recent key influences on the world of work and career development is globalization. Flum and Blustein (2000) note “a key assumption of career theories is that engaging in vocational exploration fosters awareness of one’s internal attributes and knowledge about one’s educational and vocational options, thereby facilitating the establishment of coherent career plans and a personally meaningful work life.” (p. 380) Blustein, Gill, Kenna, and Murphy, (2006) also examined the ways in which economics, technology, and education contribute to the globalization of career development and work. One of the direct results has been the increased competitiveness for jobs because progressively more work knows no boundaries. Blustein also wrote about the importance of understanding work within various cultural contexts. “Lifelong learning and career development programs can find in experiential learning theory a

conceptual rationale and guiding philosophy as well as practical educational tools (Kolb, 1984, p18).”

### **Summary**

Overall, the literature has identified the reasons why students take advantage of internship opportunities. Furthermore, several studies have identified the benefits of internships for students, yet prior research has not explored the complexity of student learning through the lens of the international internship experience. Absent from this literature are empirical data or research studies that look at the specific international internship setting and the development of global citizenship; except for one study by Benedict-Augustin (2010). There is also a gap in the research regarding the connection between theory (classroom learning) and practice (work based learning) as it pertains to international internships. Finally, although there is some research on international internships, a closer examination of how students make meaning of the international internship experience as global citizens is needed in order to empirically support or perhaps refute assumptions. The next chapter outlines the methodology of this study which was influenced by this review of the literature in this chapter, and the calls for additional research and inquiry on international internships and study abroad.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

Because little research has explored American undergraduate students' experiences of participating in international internships, this study examined the ways students make meaning of their international internship experience and perceptions of themselves as global citizens. Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which participants' international internship experiences may or may not align with the tenets of experiential learning theory, internship learning objectives and global citizenship. No research-based evidence demonstrates the degree to which students gain knowledge and skills during international internships. An in-depth qualitative study of the evolving ways in which students in an international internship perceive themselves as global citizens is a useful initial inquiry into the experience of international internships.

### **Research Questions**

It is important for students, faculty, study abroad educators, and student affairs practitioners alike to understand what learning is taking place during international internship experiences in order to promote positive experiences and to appropriately prepare students for the reality of an international internship. To fill this knowledge disparity, this proposed study will examine the student's understanding during an international internship experience in China and the ways in which they make meaning of this phenomenon by investigating the following research questions:

1. How do American undergraduate students who participate in an international internship make meaning of their experience?

2. How do American undergraduate students engaged in an international internship make meaning of their cross-cultural competence, attitudes, beliefs, values, and purpose of cross cultural vocational experience?
3. To what extent does participation in an international internship mediate perceived changes in students' global citizenship, including their views on social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement?

### **Research Methodology**

Qualitative research, according to Rossman and Rallis (2003), recognizes that an individual enters a context with a personal perspective that informs their actions which are shaped by perceptions. As a result, the qualitative method will be used in this study because it enables the researcher to explore the experience of a group of American student interns using guiding questions to gain deeper insights and understanding from their perspectives while pursuing an international internship in China.

#### **Multiple Case Study Method**

This study employed a prospective, multiple case study design involving participants in an international internship program in China. Case studies are good for describing and expanding the understanding of a phenomenon and are often used to study people and programs in education (Stake, 1995).

Yin (1994) notes that case study methodology is a favored strategy when investigating a phenomenon with a real-life context. This manner of research closely examines a case over a period of time using multiple methods, such as interviews,

observations, and document analysis (Yeh & Inman, 2007). As a “multi-perspective analysis” (Stake, 1995, p. 6), this case study will take several approaches to data collection in order to let the participant voice emerge. This is the main focus of the study. Multiple approaches using the case study method will allow the researcher and participants to have an “intense and in-depth relationship” which can be productive for rich, thick descriptions inherent in qualitative research (Yeh & Inman, 2007, p. 372).

Finally, Darke, Shanks, and Broadbent (1998) noted that this approach is beneficial because of the ability to explore areas where research is limited, like international internship programs, and can be beneficial when wanting to develop hypotheses and test theories. Yin (2003) took this idea a step further and said that theory development is another outcome of the case study. Since literature about students participating in international internships is lacking, using a case study approach will allow me to further explore the concepts present in the Chinese Studies Program.

While researchers (Creswell, 2002; Yin, 1994) state that case study findings are not generalizable, it is widely accepted (Creswell, 2002; Gubrium, & Holstein, 2000) that qualitative research and case study findings provide opportunities to generate hypotheses and to build theories about relationships that may otherwise remain hidden. Reeves (2004) proposed that the methodology of a case study is an asset in providing a venue for researchers to synthesize experiences from multiple contexts in a compressed period of time. The case study brings to bear a rich variety of experiences and can be applied to the real issues occurring in educational settings (Reeves, 2004).

### **Site and Participant Selection**

Participants in this study are undergraduate students from different universities who enrolled in a New England Private Selective University (NEPSU) in the United States to participate in an internship in Beijing, China while also studying abroad at a Chinese National University (NUC). These institutions were selected as study sites because as the researcher I was able to gain access to NEPSU students, and they work in collaboration with NUC for this specific program. The China Studies Program internship experience is intended to help the U.S. students understand local people, society, and business while gathering work experience in the world's fastest growing economy. Students participate in an internship in China in order to enhance their resume for future employers who are looking for applicants with professional experience in an international setting. It also offers the chance to learn how a Chinese organization operates. Students interning in China have opportunities to learn how to be flexible and adaptable and learn or enhance new language skills and culture sensitivity. Finally adding work on top of a study experience in China demonstrates to employers that one can function professionally in an international environment (Chinese Study Program, 2017).

#### **New England Private Selective University (NEPSU)**

Student participants in the study will be current undergraduate students at New England Private Selective University (NEPSU). NEPSU is a religiously affiliated university and confers more than 4,000 degrees annually in more than 50 fields of study. Faculty members are committed to both teaching and research and have brought in over \$60 million in research grant awards in the last year.

NEPSU had a Fall 2016 enrollment of over 9,100 undergraduates; 4,900 graduate and professional students; and 625 undergraduates in the College of Advancing Studies for a total enrollment of 14,625 students. The undergraduate student body is made up of 51% female students; 49% male students; 28% students of color (persons of African-American, Hispanic, Asian or Native American) and 3% International students. The enrolled students come from 50 states and 80 countries. NEPSU is a selective institution with 34,090 applications for 2,240 first year slots with an acceptance rate of 29%. The average SAT score (Critical Reading, Math, Writing) is 2022 on a 2400 scale. Eighty-two percent of the first year students were in the top 10% of their high school class. The faculty is made up of 737 Full-time faculty with a Faculty/Student ratio 1:14. Over 98% of faculty hold doctoral degrees.

The Office of International Programs administers the China Studies Program at NEPSU. The mission of the Office of International Programs is to work with students to make their study abroad an intellectually and personally transformative experience. The internationalization of the institution is evident in the mission of NEPSU with almost 50 percent of undergraduates incorporating an international experience by the time they graduate. The Office of International Programs coordinates more than 60 academic partnerships in over 30 countries worldwide. Each year more than 1,200 students from all fields of study participate in international programs during the academic year or in faculty-lead programs abroad during the summer. The Office of International Programs also hosts over 200 international exchange students annually from partner universities around the world.

### **National University in China (NUC)**

The National University in China (NUC) is located in the northwest of Beijing, China. NUC consists of five faculties: Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Medicine, and Information and Engineering and there are 30 schools and colleges offering 93 undergraduate programs, 199 postgraduate programs, and 173 doctoral programs. The University has over 26,000 students. The University has around 5,000 full-time faculty members, of whom about 1,200 are professors and over 1,500 are associate professors. In recent years, there has averaged over 14,000 undergraduates, over 8,000 graduates and about 4,000 doctoral candidates.

The Chinese Study Program oversees the administration and services to 1,500 long-term international students and over 2,500 short-term international students from 80 countries. The program's mission is to help students gain a better understanding of Chinese culture by: providing courses in English, on economics, business, politics, foreign policy, philosophy, history, art and literature; immersing students, who so desire, in Chinese language; engaging in internships at institutions and corporations; traveling extensively to all regions of the country; and taking classes together with Chinese students.

Internships and volunteer projects are an integral part of the program, and provide opportunities to gain work experience and exposure to contemporary Chinese economy and society. Students choose from a broad range of Chinese and international institutions, such as Women of China Magazine, CNN, The Economist magazine and Lockheed



Martin. With the approval of the program director, students may also design independent service and volunteer projects.

### **Chinese Studies Program**

NEPSU has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the National University in China (NUC) to allow students from the university to participate in the Chinese Studies Program and earn academic credit. The Chinese Studies Program is administered by NUC. Participating students in the Chinese Studies Program take classes on campus and work in an internship two days a week. The purpose of the program is to participate in meaningful work as a way to understand and learn about the operations of these companies and institutions. Internships are in five broad categories: business, information technology, media, law, and non-governmental organizations. Students choose the general categories for their preference(s).

The China Studies Program requires a comprehensive application process which includes: 1. a minimum GPA of 3.0; 2. a completed online application; 3. resume and cover letter indicating choice of internship areas; and 4. two letters of recommendation. Once NUC receives the application, the student's resumes are sent to potential intern hosts. Notifications of internship placements are given to students during the China Studies Program orientation. However, some intern hosts may contact students before their arrival, while some may request interviews after students' arrival in China.

Program internships are unpaid but carry three course credits. During the term, the Chinese Studies program holds a weekly internship seminar to discuss China's business

culture and environments, as well as issues arising from work. A ten-page internship paper is required at the end of the semester as well as an internship evaluation from the supervisor. The internship paper is an analysis of the business or field of the company or institution for which the student works. The internship paper also explores how the student benefits from the internship experience. Students are encouraged to write weekly journals about their internship experience and are expected to consult with the program coordinator throughout the semester. Seventy percent of the final grade is assigned by the internship supervisor through an evaluation form; thirty percent relies on the internship paper and attendance at the weekly internship seminar.

### **Data Collection**

The unit of analysis for this study was the undergraduate student (who is participating in an international internship in Beijing, China for the Spring 2013 semester while studying abroad at a Chinese National University (NUC). All 20 NEPSU students were invited to participate with a final cohort of eight participants. Student participants who took part in the study received a \$25.00 gift card incentive for each interview they took part in.

The data came from three sources. First, student documents were analyzed to investigate their perceptions and decision outcomes aligned with resources provided in the international internship experience. The study of material culture is an important facet of data collection. The process allows one to investigate multiple tenets of the phenomenon and the interactions taking place (Hodder, 1994). Second, data came from a series of four interviews conducted over time with each of the participants. The four

interviews provided richer, more descriptive data than a survey to explore in depth the research questions (Rossman and Rollis, 2003). Finally, in order to better understand undergraduate student's international internship experiences, I observed the participants in Beijing, China in their internship environment as well as the classroom setting. These observations helped interpret events in the internship, students' behaviors as members of the Chinese work culture, and informal patterns of interactions among participants.

### **Document Analysis**

Document analysis is a useful method to investigate students' perceptions students of their internship. According to Hodder (1994), the study of material culture is an important facet of data collection. Material culture refers to the physical objects, resources, and spaces that people use to define their culture. The process allows one to investigate multiple tenets of the phenomenon and the interactions taking place. Furthermore documents are a significant source of material evidence which provides a road map to explore voice, interpretation, and meaning (Singleton & Straits, (2005). The document analysis process allows the researcher a unique window into the data that provides a way to triangulate divergence in experience, develop additional interview questions for participants, and recognize analytic categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Singleton, & Straits, 2005).

For this study I analyzed a number of documents to develop a list of common international internship themes. I analyzed each participant's: 1. Chinese Studies Program application; 2. resume; 3. internship learning contract; 4 international internship job description; 5 reflective internship journal; and 6. 10 page internship paper. I also

examined the Chinese Studies Program documents and website to gather information on the core coursework and syllabi for the program. The document analysis process allowed me to develop themes that could lead to interview questions. I explored similarities, differences, and investigated whether it was possible to identify the learning taking place and global citizenship development. In this way, I employed the interpretational analysis approach when looking for patterns, threads, and commonalities within the data to explain the phenomenon (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

### **Interviews**

This study used a series of four interviews for each student as a primary method of data collection. Interviews provided a richer, more descriptive data than a simple survey with open ended questions (Rossman and Rollis, 2003). Interviews allow the researcher to probe important concepts and may generate results not anticipated. Phenomenological in-depth interviewing has received increasing attention as a qualitative method. The tenets of this study are based in the theoretical work of Husserl and Heidegger (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) where phenomenology “is the study of lived experiences and ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview” (Marshall & Rossman, p. 104). The phenomenon I am interested in studying through interviewing is the participant’s view of the lived experience of an international internship and how they perceive it informs their global citizenship.

Seidman (2006) advocates for a structure of three interviews for phenomenological interviewing. This series of interviews combines life-history interviewing and in-depth interviewing to build upon and explore participants’ responses

to open-ended questions. For this study, I adapted Seidman's (2006) series-of-three interview model and incorporated one additional interview for a total of four in-depth interviews. The additional interview was a result of the necessity to continue to unpack the learning taking place on the international internship. The pre-departure or first interview allowed me to learn about the participants' history as well as their motivation and expectations for the internship experience before they began the international internship through the Chinese Studies Program. I also asked participants to explain how and why they decided to pursue an international internship experience. Demographic data was also collected through a short student information questionnaire.

The second interview took place two weeks into their in country experience. This interview oriented both the researcher and participant to the international internship experience. Participants were asked to make meaning of their experiences by reflecting on where they have come and where they would like to go in the internship. Participants were also asked to share stories about their transition experience and their perception of how this transitional period framed the remaining experience. In this interview, I intentionally asked students about how they understand the role of the international internship in their lives, and inquire about future internship goals in light of the experiences they have discussed. This interview took place utilizing Skype technology while the participant was in China. For the third interview, I conducted a site visit interview in Beijing China that included conversations with both the participants and their international internship supervisors. This interview took place at the approximate mid-point of the participants' experience in China. This opportunity to observe the student embedded in the international internship helped me interpret the phenomenon

through internship site visits and conversations with site supervisors and instructors. The riches of the data collected through firsthand knowledge informed me on how students navigated the internship environment and informal patterns of interactions among participants.

Finally, the Post-experience Interview or fourth interview drew these elements together in a reflective dialogue about the meaning of the participant's total international experience. This final interview took place within two-four weeks of the participants returning to the United States. Each interview was digitally recorded and then transcribed. (See Appendix A for interview protocols.)

### **Data Collection and Analyses**

The first phase of data collection required securing permission to conduct my study from the directors of the Chinese Study Program at NEPSU and NUC. The director of the Office of International Programs at NEPSU gave the permission to conduct this study with participating students from the institution. I also secured permission from Chinese Studies Program Director at NUC. Once I had the cooperation of the different institutions, I sent out the study invite e-mail to the 20 students participating in the Chinese Study Program for the Spring 2013 semester. A total of eight students responded that they would like to take part in this study.

The second phase of data collection involved the document analysis for the Chinese Studies Program. During this phase, I created and sent a second e-mail to the directors for each of the institutions in my sample and ask if I could work with them (or

someone in their department) to acquire the program documents and syllabi for the international internships. Both directors agreed to work with me on this research and provide access to program documents and historical data. I utilized a constant comparison method of analysis and looked for the themes in the documents (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I then identified the relevant international internship learning objectives and prepared a sample list which I will used to inform the questions I developed for the interviews.

As noted by Hodder (1994), the study of material culture is an important aspect of data collection for qualitative researchers who wish to explore multiple and conflicting voices, as well as differing and interacting interpretations. “An adequate study of social interaction,” he wrote, “depends on the incorporation of mute material evidence” (p. 269). When conducting research in an academic environment, documents are the key source of such material evidence, providing an avenue of voice, interpretation, and meaning (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Indeed, failing to include document analysis in a study that seeks to understand student experiences may leave a gap in the researcher’s ability to fully understand the issue or questions at hand (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Document analysis is an unobtrusive way to triangulate and indicate discrepancies in data collected through other means, suggest interview questions for participants, and help to identify analytical categories Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The third phase of data collection included four semi-structured interviews. The questions related to the participants’ international internship experience and their perceptions about the lived experience and global citizenship. The results of these

interviews were then coded and analyzed. I identified common themes and outliers, comparing and contrasting each undergraduate student's interview across time within individual cross-sectionally at each time point. I also investigated how the lived experience that students shared in each of the interviews related (or didn't relate) to the list of international learning objectives I developed.

### **Analysis of the Data**

Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) outlined an approach for analyzing qualitative data that is commonly known as content analysis. Content analysis can be used when interpreting data from interviews, observation, and documents. In unison with this model, I got to know my data closely, which was done by continuously reviewing my notes, documents, interview transcripts, and observations identifying "analogous instances of phenomena of interest" (Erickson, 1986, p. 149). Wiersma (2001) identifies three types of codes: 1. Setting or context codes: these codes describe the setting or context descriptors of the phenomenon under study; 2. Perception codes: these codes are used to record subjects' reported perception, understanding, etc. about relevant people, circumstances, or things; and 3. Process codes. These codes are used to note event or process evolution and factors which cause or contribute to change overtime in events and experiences (Wiersma, 2001).

I categorized the data into codes using the constant comparative method to identify themes and patterns. As I identified these themes and patterns, connections between and within the codes/categories arose. I then summarized the data pertaining to the themes and captured the similarities and differences in participant's responses.



Finally, I created themes and summarized my findings. Through this process, I developed a list of key points and important findings as a result of the coding process. As a researcher, I believe it is important to be intentional about stepping back and analyzing what I have learned through the data. Questions that arise during this process could inform the future direction of the research. What I have learned? What new things have presented themselves? What has application to other settings, internship programs, and studies? This level of inquiry helped me to develop an outline. This method was fluid and I moved back and forth between the steps as I analyzed the data.

To facilitate this content analysis process, I utilized the qualitative data analysis software program HyperRESEARCH. This software made it possible the process of storing, organizing, and searching the data (Creswell, 2002). I then reviewed, multiple times, the full set of field notes, interview transcripts, and documents, identifying “analogous instances of phenomena of interest” (Erickson, 1986, p. 149). In so doing, I tested and retested the evidentiary warrant for each assertion against the data base. By conducting a systematic search of the data corpus, I will seek out disconfirming and confirming evidence, with an eye toward reframing assertions as analysis proceeds (Erickson, 1986).

### **Validity**

To ensure that validity is not threatened in the data collection process, it is imperative that a qualitative researcher employ multiple steps in the analysis of the phenomena being studied. Erickson (1986) notes that validity can be in danger when there is: an inadequate quantity of evidence; faulty interpretation of evidence; inadequate

disconfirming evidence; and a failure to scrutinize disconfirming evidence. As a result, I took numerous steps to deal with any threats and construct an accurate account of what is taking place on the student's international internship experience. First, I provide a full description of the research sites and participants, data collection devices and procedures. Second, I documented my research position and the direct and indirect effects I may have on the data collection and data analysis process. Third, I was deliberate about immersing myself in the data collection process. This included spending sufficient amount of time with the participants to identify patterns and themes. Fourth, multiple sources of data collection: observations, interviews, and documents. Fifth, study trustworthiness will be increased by triangulating the data analysis and any conclusions that may arise. Sixth, participants' international internship experiences were highlighted through themes and quotes to validate the assumptions created. Finally, at the end of each interview, I provided an opportunity for participants to check the authenticity of the work. This allowed participants to critically analyze the findings and comment on them. This served to decrease the incidence of incorrect data and the incorrect interpretation of data. The overall goal of this process was to provide findings that are authentic.

### **Significance and Limitations**

Undergraduate students, faculty, and practitioners in the field of international programs will benefit from a greater understanding of the international internship experience. In addition, international internship placement sites could benefit in ways to enhance their current programs. Ultimately, by identify the learning taking place in an international internship, educators can design both curriculum and international

internship experiences that address the wide range of expected competencies to be competitive in a global economy.

My professional and academic experience has been guided by a lifelong commitment to the education of college students, especially in the out-of-class room setting. As a researcher-practitioner my passion is to assist students in incorporating experiential learning and in particular internship experiences into their college experience. However this passion can also be a liability to this study. I need to be diligent in separating out my roles as both a practitioner and researcher.

It is my hope that this study might help contribute to unraveling the complex tangle of what American undergraduate students experience on international internships. Many questions remain to be answered concerning the value, feasibility, and quality of international internships. Exploring these initial inquiries will help move the debate about the value of an international internship forward and inform future lived experiences.

### **Research Bias**

Potential sources of sample bias include: 1) I am doctoral student in a Higher Education Administration program which is one of my sample institutions; 2) I have close professional and personal ties with several of the international internship advisors from NEPSU; 3) I am currently the Director of the Office of Career Services and Internships at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where I coordinate the internship program. I monitored the situation to ensure that my relationships to the international programs at these institutions did not interfere with my research.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **THE CHINESE STUDIES PROGRAM COHORT BACKGROUND AND INTERNSHIP PLACEMENTS**

#### **Student Characteristics**

The participants for this study were eight undergraduate students who participated in the “China Studies Program” during the spring 2013 semester, January 2013 to May 2013. The group was made up of five females and three males. Four participants identified themselves as white, two African American, and two Asian American. All participants identified English as their first language and four participants indicated significant exposure to additional languages like Chinese (2 Cantonese and 2 Mandarin), Japanese, French, German, and Spanish while growing up. Furthermore, all participants reported a grade point average of 3.3 or above; three had received scholarships from their institutions of higher education toward their tuition for the Chinese Studies program. Some variety existed in their previous travel experiences abroad and their age range was from just over 19 to 25 years old. The participants’ responses varied as to motivation for travel or study abroad, choice of program, internship opportunity, financial status, career goals, expectations for the results of the program and several other topics. These issues, among others, are examined in the introductions of the individual participants below and in the findings of this study.

Prior to data collection, each participant was given a random four-number code as a tool to uphold confidential identification. In other words, instead of writing down their real names or pseudonyms, individual codes known only to the researcher and each

respective participant. These four-number codes were also used on all researcher field notes, during the interview process and with the labeling of other artifacts dealing with the participants' identities. For the purposes of protecting the participants' identity, I assigned a pseudonym to each of them.

From the data collected during the pre-departure interview, I was able to compile information about each participant, including his or her age, major in college, hometown, travel experience and exposure to diversity (domestic and international). Furthermore, participants gave me information about their prior exposure to the Chinese language as well as other languages. These details are found below in the introductions of the participants. Students participated in international internships between 16-20 hours per week. The most common schedule had the students interning two to three days a week along with a course load of three academic classes.

### **Student One: Alice**

Alice, was a 21-year-old third-year English major and Chinese minor. Alice grew up in a medium-sized city in southern Virginia. She reported that she had never traveled abroad and that her only direct contact with people from foreign nations was when two French students stayed at her family's home for a few weeks when she was 16 years old. Her out-of-class exposure to Chinese was minimal, and she stated that she "heard Chinese phrases from international students in the student union," but she did not learn to speak Chinese from them. At the beginning of this study, Alice had completed six semesters and four Chinese courses at her University, ranging from introductory to intermediate Chinese language to an introduction to readings in Chinese literature.

### **Alice's Internship Experience**

Alice participated in a media/communication internship with a Chinese professional media company, founded 10 years earlier. This company deals with traditional media communications and marketing through a digital communication management system and digital marketing. It provides customers with one-stop service, customized integrated marketing solutions.

The media company was looking for a student intern who majored in journalism, design, media, marketing and other related majors, had some level of Chinese language ability and was an expert in graphic design software. Through the interview process, Alice showcased how her experience in these technical areas could benefit the company along with a positive working spirit, strong team work and ethical skills, ability to deal with challenges and pressure at work. As a result she was offered the internship experience.

Alice interned 20 hours a week for 8 hours on Tuesday and Thursday, plus an additional 4 hours on Friday morning. Throughout her internship experience Alice performed a number of duties and responsibilities. Under the direction of her supervisor she researched hot topics and interest in the field. Alice was able to write short articles of interest for the company's website and social media outlets. She also produced and wrote content for brochures and media guides.

Alice noted that the favorite part of her internship included the extras the company provided. The company was very focused on offering a great working environment for their employees. As a result, all 57 employees and 6 interns were provided free water, tea, soft drinks, and coffee throughout the work day. Plus this was

the first time Alice ever experienced this type of company benefit. It made an impact on her experience as she remarked that, “the free drinks saved me a lot of money when I was interning. Normally, I would have had to buy my own coffee which cost me 36.17 CNY (Chinese Yuan Renminbi) or \$5.50 a coffee and that adds up quickly.” From her own calculation she estimated the free beverages on her internship saved her over \$160.00. Interns were invited to attend and participate in all employee events like picnics or dinners organized by the company. The goal was to make interns feel welcome in the company.

### **Student Two: Elizabeth**

At over 25 years old, Elizabeth was the oldest of the participants. Elizabeth’s story is unique, as she spent time in the US Navy, and then returned to college to get her degree in International Business. She stated that one of her dreams was to learn Chinese and to possibly return to the Chinese workforce to teach English. Her current major in college was International Business, but she started her college career as an elementary education major. Elizabeth decided to change her major after shadowing an elementary school teacher. She enjoyed the experience, but felt her professional passions aligned with international business. Elizabeth has traveled extensively, in Europe and the United Kingdom. Most of these trips were for short vacations; however, she had participated in two separate study abroad programs and thus was one of three participants in this study who had prior experience with study abroad programs. In 2011, she studied German for two months in Austria and the summer before her participation in the Chinese Studies program, she took French courses for five weeks in a Paris program. Elizabeth’s exposure to French during her childhood was significant, she stated that her “father’s family spoke

Cajun French.” She heard many conversations in Cajun French through interaction with her Cajun-speaking family members, but Elizabeth did not learn to speak the language beyond small phrases. She regretted it and remarked that her “father’s family spoke Cajun French before attending school in Louisiana. However, upon entering school, they were forced to speak English, so my family lost a lot of its French.” Prior to this study, Elizabeth had been a student for more than 6 semesters at her University and had taken four Chinese courses, including intermediate language and oral expression, an introduction to Chinese literature, and Chinese culture and civilization.

### **Elizabeth’s Internship Experience**

Elizabeth was a non-traditional student majoring in international business. She was seeking an internship that could build on her academic major and expose her to business activities in China. She was also interested in exploring internships with start-up companies. She secured a business assistant internship with a start-up international trading company. The company was founded in 2011 and conducts international trade through imports and exports, procurement and sales. While the company was small with only ten employees, they were focused on generating new business development and positioning itself as one of the top industry players within five years.

The company was looking for a business intern with a background or interest in international trade and who could be a good team player. The company specifically sought interns who were interested in working for a small start-up company. As a small start-up, they wanted an intern who could work under pressure and adapt to new environments during frequent business meetings. Elizabeth was able to showcase through



her interview that she had these skills, and was outcome focused. As a result, she was offered the business assistant internship.

Elizabeth interned 16 hours a week at her internship placement on Tuesday and Thursday. In her role, she followed up on daily business tasks which included some administrative duties and communicating and coordinating with local and foreign clients. After significant training, she was promoted to handling orders and contacting local manufacturers on her own. This included arranging export, custom declaration and storage. Along with her internship supervisor, she visited clients on behalf of the company and followed up with regular progress reports. Finally, she developed and translated marketing materials into English for the company's marketing efforts.

### **Student Three: Adam**

Adam at age 19, was the youngest participant in this study. He was an International Studies and Chinese major with dance minor. During the pre-departure interview Adam revealed that he was fascinated with languages and cultures. He indicated that his only international travel experience had been on a Caribbean cruise when he was 12 years old. Growing up, he was not exposed to any language except English, but was later introduced to Chinese through cultural class in high school during his freshman year. He later gained some exposure to the Chinese language as a student worker in the Chinese Cultural Center at his University. At the beginning of the program, Adam had completed his second year at his University, one intermediate-level Chinese language course and one course of oral expression with a concentration in Chinese culture.

### **Adam's Internship Experience**

Although Adam was the youngest participant in this study, by the time he decided to take part in the Chinese Studies Program, he had already completed three internships. These internship experiences along with his interview helped him secure an international sales internship with an international Chinese trading company. This company worked internationally with major clients, and supplied goods both directly to these companies and indirectly through the use of a third party. They were looking for an intern who was an international business major with analytical, creative skills who could work independently. The company exported a product which was produced in one factory. They had also just started to produce more products for the domestic market as well.

Adam's company established its international trade department in 2000 and was working to expand this department. The company is also hoping to diversify their international sales and begin selling their domestic market products in their international market. The company currently employs eight sales staff in their headquarters and over 100 manufacturing employees in their only factory. Adam was one of two interns from the Chinese Studies Program who interned with this company in the spring of 2013.

As an international sales intern, Adam performed a number of duties and responsibilities. He was charged with getting to know the sales process from design concept to sale. Adam gained experience in regulating documents and making sales. With his internship supervisor and then eventually on his own, he visited customers. Finally, Adam built up the e-commerce side of the business on the company's website and social media outlets. Adam began his experience interning 16 hours a week on Tuesday and Thursday. However, two weeks into his internship, he increased his hours to 24 by

interning for 4 hours a week on Monday and Friday in addition to his Tuesday and Thursday schedule. This was done with the support of his internship supervisor and faculty advisor at the Chinese Studies Program. When asked why he decided to do this, Adam commented, “I am learning more about the Chinese culture and work environment on the internship compared to what is going on in classes.”

#### **Student Four: Lisa**

Lisa was a 21-year-old double major in international relations and Chinese cultural studies. She is of Chinese American decent. As a Midwesterner, Lisa’s only previous international travel experience was a two-week vacation to Canada when she was 14. She had traveled domestically to several regions of the United States. She reported that she heard some Chinese while growing up, but none of her family members spoke the languages and she was not fully exposed to Chinese until college. Before her experience in this program, Lisa had completed six semesters as a student at her University and four introductory to intermediate Chinese language courses, intermediate oral expression in Chinese and an introductory Chinese literature course.

#### **Lisa’s Internship Experience**

As with several of the previous study participants, Lisa had a double major in International Business and Chinese Culture. However, she was interested in pursuing a different type of internship. Lisa was looking for a sports oriented internship opportunity. Lisa participated in a Sports Education Internship with an International Sports Management Company. This organization was a sports management company specializing in sports consulting, the organization of sporting events and the running of

coaching academies in a major Chinese city. This was a unique opportunity for Lisa to join a company that was focused on developing their business in a unique sector within the Chinese economy. She interned for 16 hours a week on Tuesday and Thursday.

This company was looking for a candidate to intern in the marketing and sales department. Lisa interned alongside the Chinese marketing team to focus on marketing with the foreign/expat community. She created marketing and promotional materials through traditional and social media venues. Lisa was responsible for maintaining and updating the company's website. Along with fellow employees and interns, she identified new clients and maintained existing relationships. A distinctive role of her internship had her assigned to the marketing department where she took photos and videos to capture the sporting experience and post on social media sites. She also assisted with editing website marketing content that focused on English speaking clients.

#### **Student Five: Heather**

Heather was a 20-year old Junior, accounting major from Germany. She had been taking Chinese courses since her freshman year. Heather was interested, not necessarily in the country of China but rather the opportunity to do something professionally with a Chinese organization. At the time of this study, she was the only international student participating in this study. Fluent in both German and English, Heather did not speak much Chinese at the beginning of this experience. She mentioned several times during the interview process that she did not feel confident in her Chinese speaking skills. However, she was very hopeful she would learn to converse more in Chinese during her

time in Beijing. According to her own understanding, she definitely came to college to try out Chinese and:

Pretty much after my Freshman year I decided that it was more work and I figured I'll try to go into the country and see if my Chinese gets significantly better, and then I just want to get to know the country and see if I'd ever want to work there or not.

Heather has extensive travel experience in Europe and Northern Africa; however, she had never traveled to Asia.

### **Heather's Internship Experience**

As an international student, Heather had a unique perspective of being an international student in two different countries with distinct cultural and social difference. As a result, Heather felt she had a unique advantage in relation to her fellow student cohort for the simple fact that she has lived the international student experience. Heather chose an internship that would provide her with an accounting experience with a global company in Beijing, China. So she participated in an accounting assistant internship with an Australian-owned manufacturer. Their flagship products used innovative materials and were sold in the Australian and American market. Initial research and production were done in Australia and the main production plant was in Beijing. They were a growing company, with plans to expand into new markets.

The company was looking for an intern with an accounting or finance background. They wanted a candidate with some knowledge of tax and accounting law in

China. However, the most important qualities they were looking for included a detailed oriented, proactive intern who could demonstrate initiative and the ability to work independently on projects. Heather was able to showcase her abilities through a very intensive three hour interview. She interned for 16 hours a week on Tuesday and Thursday, while balancing an extra academic load with 4 courses compared to the traditional three courses. Heather added the extra course because she was interested in the topic – China and the European Union (EU). She felt she could learn and bring a unique perspective to this course because Germany was in the EU.

As an accounting assistant intern, Heather was exposed to accounting and finance practices in China. She compiled and implemented inventory and production costing models/systems based on international standards. Her internship supervisor exposed Heather to corporate compliance and structural relationship models and information along Chinese accounting policies and procedures. Heather also reviewed financial models and analyzed potential new markets for the company.

#### **Student Six: Michael**

Michael grew up in Texas and was attending the private University in this study. During the data collection process, he was a Sophomore, studying finance and Asian studies as a double major. He decided to attend this University due to the financial aid he received along with the fact that the institution was ranked number one in travel abroad in terms of the number of students who travel abroad each academic year.

It was nice to have that perk, to make it really convenient to travel abroad, and to help you through the process a lot. And combining that with the Chinese program, I thought it would be a great fit.

Michael chose the Chinese Studies Program because of its location in Beijing. He also had two friends who had participated in the program in the past and had great things to say about their international internship experiences. When he first started researching programs, he noted that he thought he would have preferred a program in Shanghai because of his business background. However, it seemed to him that Beijing would offer him the best opportunity for full-on Chinese immersion.

Michael believes that the internship in Beijing was an opportunity to get his feet wet in some kind of Chinese workplace. “From there I could kind of prove to these large finance firms in Shanghai that I have office experience in China.” He was not ruling out another internship in Shanghai. He thought the Chinese Studies Program would help set him apart from other future candidates for these opportunities. Michael anticipated that “the Chinese business culture would certainly be different from work environment in the states.”

Michael was a Sophomore finance and Asian studies major when he participated in the Chinese Studies Program. He had extensive travel and study abroad experience in Guatemala on mission trips during the summer of both his Sophomore and my Junior year in high school. He was a Spanish/English interpreter for doctors participating in the mission trip and local hospital staff in Guatemala. When the people came in, he asked about their symptoms and then he would fill out the forms for them and give those to the

doctors. Another large part of his work was working in the surrounding small mountain towns, where he helped to build houses.

When asked why he chose this international internship, he answered:

The biggest focus of the world is the customs and cultures of business. I feel like business is all about kind of making things happen in the most convenient and streamlined fashion, and a large part of that is dealing with the customs of the people who you work with. So this will be a great experience for me to have an idea of how you work with a person from China or how you work with a person from Spain and how they prefer to do business and so on.

### **Michael's Internship Experience**

Michael was interested in participating in a Finance or business oriented internship that would expose him exceptional experiences that most American students would not experience. So he chose to participate in the Trading Internship with a Chinese Import/Export Company. This company has been in operation for over 150 years, working closely with hundreds of partner factories. Its core functions include manufacturing, research and development, marketing and international trade. The firm is located in an old manufacturing district in Beijing, China.

The company's main products include construction materials, building hardware, aluminum frameworks and sustainable power. The company served customers in more than 50 countries, with a focus on customer satisfaction. It emphasized the values of team work, trust and innovation.



**Student Seven: Daniel**

Daniel was a US citizen of Chinese descent. Both of his parents immigrated to the United States from China in 1990. This date is significant because both parents participated in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, commonly known as the June Fourth Incident (六四事件) or '89 Democracy Movement (八九民运) in Chinese. These were student-led popular demonstrations in Beijing which took place in the spring of 1989 and received broad support from city residents, exposing deep splits within China's political leadership. Daniel was born in Massachusetts, and his first language was Cantonese. However, he spoke English fluently and had taken two years of Mandarin classes. At the time of his Chinese Studies Program experience he was a Junior Economics and Pre-med major at a selective Catholic college in Boston, MA. The ability to participate in the international internship was a major factor in Daniel's decision to participate in the program:

It was a big factor actually. I think I would have gone regardless but it made it that much more worth it because I wanted an internship specifically in some medical field whether it was Chinese medicine or western medicine. And, I was able to do, get in contact with, I know the program coordinator got in contact with the doctor over there, and I'm going to meet with her once I get over there.

**Daniel's Internship Experience**

Daniel was an economics and pre-med major who was interested in a science or medical internship in China. But due to Chinese law and regulations, a pre-med

internship was very hard to come by. So Daniel expanded his internship interest to include research opportunities. As a result he participated in a science internship with a Chinese bio-technology company. This bio-technology company was a high-tech enterprise engaged in the research and development, production and distribution of veterinary bioproducts.

Daniel interned for 16 hours a week on Wednesdays and Thursdays. He was the only intern at the company. Daniel worked directly with the research team to design and update technical monographs and reviewed research protocols in different countries. He was able to get hands-on research experience in the bio-technology company and provide translation services for scientists. Finally, he coordinated English communications between the researchers and medical/pharmaceuticals professionals in different countries.

#### **Student Eight: Angie**

Angie was born and raised in Hawaii. However, both of her parents were born and raised in the Philippines. She attended a small liberal arts college in Oregon. She was pursuing a Bachelor of Science in international business, with a double major in Japanese language and Chinese Studies. In the spring of 2011, she studied abroad in Yokohoma, Japan. As a result she was very proficient in Japanese and spoke a little bit of Tagalog – the Filipino language based on her cultural background. Angie stated that she “loved learning languages.” She became interested in the Chinese Study Program for the opportunity apply her language skills in a business environment. She specifically chose her college based on the study abroad programs. The college she attended is known for having a remarkable study abroad program to the point where they actually pay for

student's roundtrip tickets to the country where they study abroad. Her college paid for her round-trip ticket to China, even though they already funded her plane ticket for her first trip.

Angie originally wanted to study Chinese to help her Japanese. During her pre-departure interview she said:

Funny thing, I found out I was better in Chinese a little later on, it changed, but with this particular program in my university, they [the university administration] ... tried to actually start the program the year before me, 2013, we're actually the first classes to actually establish a Chinese program for my institution at home. So we're sort of like the early test birds that are setting us up with the Chinese Studies Program, and my school actually have a history. A professor from my school goes to China to teach English and they have a teacher that comes to my college to teach Chinese, and so I'm automatically set up with that type of program when we go there.

The opportunity to participate in the international internship was a significant factor in her decision to participate in the Chinese Studies Program:

Oh my God, that's a huge, a huge, huge, huge, thing being an International Business major, hearing that there's an internship offered automatically I was like, oh, I want to do this internship to get experience for my major, and it's on an international scale which not many people could say because usually a lot of internships they do [are] domestic. And having an opportunity abroad, it works with my major; that's exciting.

She has traveled through Asia to two island nations, Japan and the Philippines. In the Spring of 2011, Angie chose to spend four months in Yokohoma, Japan due to her Japanese major. However, Angie believed that growing up in Hawaii had a big impact on her decision.

Hawaii, it's such a prime spot for international business, specifically for Japanese people, there's more of a Chinese influence coming in. So that's why I wanted to go abroad to these places, not only for my curiosity since my childhood, but also to really see how this could play into my future and what I could do, strengthen my foundation.

In the summer of 2010, Angie spent three weeks in the Philippines visiting family. She goes on to say, that this was a transformational experiences:

But what I learned there was unbelievable because I actually saw the place where my mom and dad grew up. And my dad's neighborhood, if you've ever seen Slum Dog Millionaire, the slums that they show you there, it's exactly like the type of environment that my dad grew up in. And to see him go from that to where I am now, in his life, it's just like wow, and the kids that live there. So that was a really big mind-blowing experience I got from going there.

### **Angie's Internship Experience**

Angie was looking for a distinctive internship experience that would expose her to Chinese culture. So she accepted an NGO Marketing Internship with a Chinese social enterprise. that benefits those affected by disasters, illness or poverty, and minority people living in remote areas. It had a crafts, gifts and coffee shop to sell hand made products from these people in order to expand their market and bring their skills and their needs before a larger section of the community.

The organization was looking for an internship candidate who was familiar with business and marketing skills along with a knowledge of the Chinese Language. They

wanted an independent thinker who was also a good communicator. Most of all, they wanted an organized intern who could work independently. They found that intern in Angie, who demonstrated the ability to work independently and provide strong social media/website skills combined with a IT background and excellent communication expertise. This experience coupled with her interest in working with an NGO was a perfect combination that secured her the internship.

As an NGO Marketing Intern, Angie developed a strong social media and website presence to increase public understanding of the organization. This included extensive website design and content development. Along with her internship supervisor and the Marketing Director she helped develop their marketing strategy for fiscal year 2013-2014. Angie also participated and assisted in managing over 25 promotional events in Beijing. She helped to establish and maintain contact with local and foreign business community. The goal was to make a difference in the lives of Chinese citizens and support a grass roots NGO approach to the critical stage of development.

In summary, students' internship interests were as diverse as the academic and demographic background of the participants. In most cases, student participated in internship experiences intended to help them develop important career skills along with Chinese immersion opportunities. The choice of internship was a very personal decision for each student, and many went into the experience with one set of expectations that changed during their experience. The next chapter follows the participants through their international internship as students through the lens of the Kolb model.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

### Overview

Chapter five discusses the results of this study. I have organized this chapter according to the phases and chronology (pre-departure, in-country, re-entry, and post-study) of the “Chinese Study Program in Beijing China. This organization allows for the participants’ perspectives to evolve from pre-departure to post-study, as they did during the data collection process.

As described, the data consisted of participants’ questionnaires or interview responses, and reflective papers. Before beginning to transcribe their words, I read over the documents for a holistic view of each individual’s experience. Immersing myself in the data, I made written (*sources*) comments in the margins of the documents listing my original impressions and questions. Next, I transcribed each of the sources and began to generate categories, themes, and patterns. The transcripts of a series of four series of semi-structured interviews as well as a review of eight final internship papers were coded using HyperResearch. This program was used to examine the frequency of codes for each of interviews and final internship papers. (see chapter 3 for details on coding procedure).

After I coded the data and searched for alternative explanations, I also compared and contrasted each individual’s responses with the other participants. Six major codes were identified with 56 sub-codes as seen in appendix E:

### **Pre-departure: Motivations**

A pre-departure interview with each of the 8 participants illuminated participants' motivation for study abroad and choice of the Chinese Studies program, future career goals, personal goals, and expectations for the experience abroad. When asked about their motivations for studying abroad, most participants mentioned the desire to see China and to improve their linguistic abilities in Chinese. Alice's motivation was clear: "linguistic improvement is the primary motivation. I would like to be able to think in Chinese. I want to learn about the people of China." Elizabeth showed similar views, as she stated that her main motivation was the "desire to visit China and Beijing in particular and improve language capabilities." Daniel reported several goals: "I want to become a better Chinese speaker, learn about my heritage in China, get comfortable living away from home, finish my minor, acquire experience dealing with people from other backgrounds." Adam's overall motivation was not only to learn Chinese, but also for "adventure and escape and for sheer knowledge. I wish to move in the direction of being and feeling as a global citizen vs. a misplaced one."

Participant's motivations varied for why they specifically chose the Chinese Studies in Beijing program. For Elizabeth, it was the small group atmosphere that attracted her to the program; she saw many opportunities to speak Chinese with the program participants and with Chinese nationals. Alice's motivations for choosing the summer program were related to her academic plan of study, finishing her Chinese minor and learning about the Chinese way of life: "it's the number and type of credits I need to complete my degree; I'll be able to finish my minor and finish it quickly; I wanted to

participate in a program that provided for a view of how people really live in other countries rather than a tourist-centered city.” Lisa and Michael provided more details in their reasons for choosing the Chinese Studies program. For Lisa, the activities, the excursions and the uniqueness of the internships, chances to speak Chinese with native speakers and available scholarship money were the most attractive aspects of the program. She also remarked about how her non-traditional student status and academic discipline motivated her to choose the program:

I am older than many college-age students and thought this program is more intense and for more serious and mature students. I’m also interested in watching the group of participants and how they interact with one another and how stress and conflict management techniques are used amongst the group. I am a sociology major, so this will be very interesting for me to observe the group of students as a social network—it’s something I would actually like to study in the future and I think I may get some research ideas from this experience. I also love to cook and I want to learn about Chinese cuisine.

In addition, Michael sought to improve his language skills and collect information on a different culture and way of life. His motivation included learning about: “Chinese daily life in a large city where I am isolated from other Americans and have limited access to English, so I’ll be surrounded by Chinese. I will be exposed to Chinese every day for several weeks, in its natural environment, not in a classroom.” His motivations were also career oriented:

“[a]s a future student of international law, I feel that daily, extended exposure to China and foreign society is essential.”

Participants also had personal and/or linguistic goals they were hoping to achieve as a result of the program. In terms of improvement of Chinese language skills, all the participants listed listening as the number one skill they hoped to improve with this program, followed by speaking. Interestingly, reading and writing were a distant third



and fourth for all the participants. Lisa's reflection on why this happened captures many of the other student's feelings. She expressed that "learning how to speak with Chinese language is a big goal. Along the way I expect to learn how to read and write in Chinese, so those weren't that important to me." Angie's overall goals remained focused on improving her Chinese: "I hope to be able to understand spoken Chinese better. I would also like to be able to speak more easily in Chinese and not have to think first then speak. I would like to begin speaking automatically in Chinese." Alice's personal goals were to visit China and to improve her speaking skills in Chinese, while Elizabeth was eager to "experience another culture first-hand."

I also asked the participants several questions which sought their viewpoints on cultural topics, including their views of the U.S., China, the definition of culture, and potential expectations of "culture shock" while abroad. To summarize, all participants indicated that they had a respect for other cultures, a strong desire to travel abroad and hopes for international peace. In seeking their pre-departure views of the United States, I asked participants to rate their experience with "critical views of their own country." Alice had little to no critical views of the U.S. and "loved her country and nothing would change that": Elizabeth was "proud to be American"; Adam and Lisa rated their critical views as "great." In contrast, Heather stated "actually, I have always had the least pride in the USA."

All participants said they were looking forward to learning more about Chinese "culture." Instead of using a pre-determined definition of culture, I asked participants for their personal definition of "culture." The participants had similar definitions of culture: "it is the norms, beliefs, artifacts, arts (music, movies architecture, dance), political

beliefs, religious denominations and history of a society” (Alice); “it is made up of the laws, customs, history, heritage and languages of the people in a region with specific boundaries” (Michael); “the shared opinions, ideas, objects by people within the ‘society’” (Elizabeth). Daniel was thorough with his definition:

Culture is distinct and repetitious events, customs, or ways of being that are particular to a certain area at a certain time. Culture often, though not always, reflects a society’s values, needs, and wants. Culture is biological—stimulated by outside influence and forever changing. As the world grows smaller, an individual culture becomes more blurred and mixed with other cultures to form a new, hybrid culture.

The participants had specific pre-departure expectations of what they would learn or what they wanted to learn about Chinese culture during their abroad experience. When I asked about these expectations for cultural acquisition, they were excited and eager for the experience. Alice remarked, “I can’t wait to see what people do for work and how the work schedule is. I want to visit a school and see how it’s different from our schools in America.” Elizabeth was focused on learning about Chinese people in general, how they interact with one another and how they would respond to her as an American:

I’ve heard so many rumors about how much the Chinese [don’t like Americans]—I want to see for myself what they are really like. I also want to learn about the history of China and the arts mostly music and painting interest me a lot, too.

Adam was open to anything cultural he might come across in his experience abroad:

This is not a traditional study abroad program, which is great! We will practice the language in real life and in daily life with Chinese people. I anticipate learning about their habits, gestures, history, food and a lot about the Chinese business world through our internships.

Several questions in the pre-departure interview sought information from the participants on how they felt about going abroad just prior to departure. They all stated

that they had mixed feelings of excitement and nervousness. They were “ready” for the trip, yet they felt “unsure” because “this is so new to me.” Angie felt “bold, curious and adventurous,” yet “unsure of the unknown.” I asked them to anticipate any challenges that could arise for them while abroad, and all participants mentioned effective “communication.” They anticipated encountering communication barriers, since they knew they would not understand everything that was said to them. Alice and Lisa, in particular, were nervous about communicating in Chinese; Alice was afraid that she would “forget everything about Chinese, panic and look stupid.

To further the inquiry on their views about feelings and expectations, I asked participants to discuss their definition of “culture shock” and whether they anticipated feeling any culture shock during their time on the program in China. Their definitions of “culture shock” had common elements. Alice and Elizabeth’s definitions were very similar: “difficulty adapting to a culture other than one’s own.” For Lisa, it was the “extreme anxiety at being displaced in a culture to which you are unaccustomed.

Heather’s definition was similar, but included an element of anticipation:

It is simply experiencing a surrounding far different from your own to the extent that it was something difficult for which you are prepared. Culture shock is often equated with discomfort though, I would hope, it can be exciting as well. I am ready!

Throughout the pre-departure interviews, Michael remained anticipatory and open to any and all experiences he was about to have on his first international program. In fact, he was the only participant who did not think he would experience much culture shock while in the China: “I don’t expect to have much culture shock at all. In fact, the shock would probably be the change in mentality, a shock I would like—something different is

something I would greatly appreciate.” The female participants all thought they would experience some culture shock, including the language barriers, habits of communication and differences in food. However, it should be noted that no participant expected to have “severe” culture shock to the point of having great difficulty in coping in China.

### **Participants’ Perspectives: Experiences in China**

In addition to observing the participants during their in-country experience, I conducted an in-country interview with each participant during their ninth week (April 2013) in Beijing, China in order to gain information about their initial perceptions of the program, their experiences and adjustments to China. First, I asked the participants whether they felt they had had a difficult time adjusting to any aspects of the Chinese culture or life in Beijing. All participants except for Daniel felt that they had experienced a few episodes of cultural “difference,” but nothing that they would label as “shock.” Alice and Elizabeth reported having to take a few days to adjust to the small showers and the “variety of bathrooms in China” including toilets that were nothing more than holes in the floor. Heather had some difficulty with the “realm of food” that was served, since she admitted to being a “very picky eater.” She resolved this by saying, “I could always get a quick Coke and some ‘American’ fries somewhere if I thought I couldn’t take it anymore!” Lisa said she grew fond of the different foods to which she was exposed after a short period of adjustment. Michael, in the meantime, reported that he experienced no unexpected difficulties to adjusting to China, except for the realization that “everything is closed during lunchtime except for restaurants, so I just waited until lunch was over. It was great to actually see people relaxing and having a meal at lunch—people really enjoy

their life here.” Alice, however, reflected with a high degree of self-awareness about her adjustment to China:

As soon as I got here it became evident how obviously un-Chinese I look, sound, and act, and I’m not used to standing out that much. People think nothing of it here to just sit next to you and light up a cigarette...smoke right in front of you and blow it right at you. Back home, that would be really rude, but I think it’s normal for them, so that was an adjustment because at first I was offended, but now realize, that’s just the way it is here and it’s not meant to be offensive and shouldn’t be taken personally.

Next, I investigated how participants perceived Chinese and the “Chinese culture,” after having been exposed to each for only a couple of weeks. All eight participants indicated that they felt more comfortable and confident, in general, with international travel and being in China. Specifically, Heather simply stated that she was “far less apprehensive and nervous now.” Daniel added that he felt he was learning a lot about being “human”:

I feel in general that people here are really very similar to those in the United States. The similarities are human and the differences are both superficial and trivial. It has been confirmed to me that we are all part of the “human race.” There are all types of people in every culture.

It was again Elizabeth who gave the most extensive report. She used the study interviews to express her feelings, negotiate her experience and sometimes, admittedly, to vent her frustrations or concerns:

I like it a lot more here now...it’s easy to make generalizations about a whole group of people from meeting a few not-so-great people, but as we’ve spent more time here and met more Chinese people, I’ve realized how potentially different they all are, just like Americans. What I’ve seen of the culture is interesting to me, but limited. I think with staying at the University and being with the China Studies group, we are not “living” Chinese culture we are just seeing the surface of what represents the culture. I’d like to come back and live in China and really “live” here and discover more on my own.

Overall, Alice, who was most characteristic (age, travel experience and viewpoint) as a “typical” or traditional American study abroad student, experienced the greatest shock while in China, and took the longest to adjust to the differences in surroundings, language and culture. However, she indicated to me that she was “reflecting” (informal in-country conversation, April 2013) about her abroad experience and she perceived significant gains or development in several areas as a result from participation in this international program.

### **Perceived Language Acquisition**

As for their perceived improvement in Chinese, all participants reported the most progress in listening or speaking skills. Prior to departure, Heather indicated that she was not very confident speaking Chinese, particularly with native speakers (Interview, April 2013). One of the reasons she chose the Chinese Studies program was to improve on these areas: “I have to get over my fear of speaking Chinese for extended periods of time with native speakers. I am afraid of being critiqued and looking stupid. I figured this program will force me to get over my fears” (Interview, April 2013). Also, Lisa was very uncomfortable with the usage of different verb tenses in Chinese. Her self-rating of her Chinese was at a low to intermediate level. She perceived her writing skills in Chinese to be her strongest, followed by her speaking and listening skills. She rated her reading in Chinese as her weakest skill.

After her in-country internship interview (Interview, April 2013), Elizabeth discussed her language acquisition during the program. She thought her listening comprehension was still her strongest Chinese skill (same indication as in pre-departure), and she also believed her speaking was still the weakest, though it had “drastically

improved” during the program (Interview, May 2013). Elizabeth thought the internship was the best manner in which to learn Chinese, followed by “talking to Chinese students at dinners and social events outside of the classroom, though I preferred one-on-one conversations than those in large groups with Chinese students [...] I felt intimidated there” (Interview, April 2013). She stated that she improved her speaking of Chinese the most, particularly lessening her apprehension to speak in Chinese in front of native speakers. However, she was still intimidated to speak with native speakers who were strangers: “if someone questions me or corrects me or if they don’t understand me, I sort of panic and have a hard time explaining myself” (Interview, April 2013). Overall, she thought she had greatly improved her Chinese vocabulary, and she felt much more at ease with just speaking and letting it “come out” (Interview, April 2013) and trying circumlocutions when she did not know a particular term. Her end-of-program self-rating of her Chinese had changed from the pre-departure rating (Interview, January 2013) of a low to intermediate level to an intermediate to high-intermediate one (Interview, May 2013). As a result of participation in the program, Elizabeth believed she had improved her listening in Chinese over any other skill (Interview, May 2013).

Prior to departure, Angie experienced a great deal of difficulty understanding questions in Chinese and that she felt she had issues with the usage of different verb tenses (Interview, January 2013). She expressed that she thought she could communicate, but only after the Chinese speaker with whom she spoke repeated and rephrased most of the questions; her spoken Chinese was extremely choppy and she hesitated a lot in her responses (Interview, April 2013). Before departure to China, Daniel gave his Chinese language skills an intermediate rating. As for his skills in Chinese, he

rated his writing as his top skill, followed by reading and speaking. He rated listening as his lowest skill: “I listen 100% but hearing is another matter” (Interview January 2013). His main linguistic goal in Chinese was to improve his speaking skills in Chinese.

During the beginning of the in-country interview segment of the research observations (January, 2013), Daniel assessed his communication ability in Chinese as limited. Daniel felt he could only communicate in Chinese if the person with whom he was speaking to in Chinese, repeated and rephrased the questions. His answers were then extremely choppy and he hesitated a lot in his responses, based on his own assessment of his language skills. Near the end of the program, however, Daniel reported that he felt more comfortable speaking the language (Interview, May 2013). Although he still had some difficulty using correct tenses in Chinese, he understood most questions and was able to communicate better than when he had arrived in Beijing (Interview, April 2013). Another noticeable change was with Michael and his demeanor and confidence in Chinese —the “deer in headlights” look he had often reported when rapid Chinese was spoken to him during the beginning of his internships and during the first weeks of the program in China, had greatly diminished (self observation, January 2013). Instead of being completely afraid and overwhelmed, he was able to laugh at the situation and use gestures and ask for repetitions (in-country observation, April 2013). He seemed calmer and just listened to the questions, absorbed the meaning as best he could and improved in the quickness of his answers and his overall comprehension in Chinese (in-country observation, April 2013). As a result of participation in the program, Michael believed his listening skills improved the most due to the “constant interaction with and observation of his Chinese co-workers,” followed by his speaking skills, with “great conversations



with Chinese co-workers in his internship” (Interview, April 2013). He had positive opinions about the language experience in the internship, which “helped the most because I was able to hear the people speak to one another in a natural way. This was the best way to pick up the acceptable grammar and spoken Chinese” (Interview, April 2013). At the end of the program, he rated his Chinese at the high-intermediate level (Interview April 2013).

In the pre-departure segment of the program, Adam had no problem in his ability to understand Chinese and believed he could answer quickly and effectively (Interview, January, 2013). He rated his Chinese as “strong,” except for his listening skills, which he rated as “weak.” During the program, he hoped to work on all areas of his Chinese, but in particular listening and speaking. He rated his overall Chinese at a high-intermediate level.

Throughout the program in China, Daniel was the participant who made the most effort to speak Chinese at all times. He sought out opportunities to speak Chinese with any Chinese person and he was not shy or intimidated when speaking Chinese with the host nationals. Daniel exhibited a very quick usage of new vocabulary and Chinese expressions, and he showed great ease in switching from English to Chinese (Interview, April 2013). He was confident before leaving for the program, but as a result of the experience, he exuded even more confidence in his skills. When I asked him about his self-assessment of his learning, particularly in regard to Chinese, he had several opinions:

I especially understand more spoken Chinese, even very quick spoken language. I think I speak better and write a bit better. [. . .] I thought my Chinese was good before I left home, but now I know I can handle being in China, surrounded by native speakers and I think I do quite well. [. . .] I would’ve preferred to stay with a host family to improve my language skills and to learn about the culture. [. . .] I

also would've liked some separation from the China Studies Program group [hesitation] and I think it would've given us more chances to learn the culture, and we'd have spoken more Chinese. [pause] I was disappointed that some of the US students spoke so much English. (Conversation in English after the end-of-program Interview, April 2013)

Finally, Daniel agreed that he felt his listening skills had improved the most since he listened to native speakers in a “real-life” setting for hours each day. He noted:

We were in an everyday professional setting in which we were the minority as non-native speakers, so very few Chinese speakers would slow down and talk to us differently or more slowly or simply than the other Chinese people, so it was great practice.

Daniel also noticed improvement in asking questions and with “technical terms,” like answering phones and proper business greetings (Interview, April 2013). He felt he learned the most Chinese during the internship, particularly at the weekly staff meetings, and speaking one-on-one with native speakers helping with the program. At the end of the program, he felt his level of Chinese had “gone up from intermediate to low-advanced” (Interview, April 2013).

Prior to departure (and in the first couple of weeks of the in-country segment), Alice seemed fairly comfortable speaking Chinese, though she appeared somewhat nervous or anxious when she did not understand what a Chinese speaker was saying. She maintained that she was comfortable with Chinese “most of the time” (Interview, May 2013), and she gave her Chinese a rating of intermediate to low-advanced. She found her reading and writing skills to be the strongest in Chinese. Furthermore, Alice reported that she found listening to, and comprehending spoken Chinese to be the most difficult for her, so she thought the program in Beijing would be great because she would “get a trained ear and lots of practice with native speakers” (Interview, January, 2013).

Near the end of the program, Alice seemed much more comfortable speaking Chinese. She incorporated newly learned vocabulary in her Chinese, and her comprehension and listening skills had improved (which she also reported in her self-perceived improvements) (observations and Chinese interview, April 2013). Alice did report some frustration when a Chinese co-worker who did not understand her Chinese, or if she was misunderstood (observations, April 2013). Alice reported listening, then speaking, as her most improved skills in Chinese. She said that she learned Chinese mostly through “the program internship and time spent in conversation with my Chinese co-workers such as at the weekly dinners when one person came to sit with us” (Interview, April 2013).

It was interesting to note that none of the participants perceived great improvement in their reading or writing skills. In fact, they all stated some disappointment in a lack of improvement in these skills, and they suggested that more scholarly readings and discussions on the readings be incorporated into the program in a more formal manner during the class sessions. When I asked for their suggestions on how to improve the reading and writing portion of the program, they felt a more class-like setting, or “reading and writing seminar” (Interview, April 2013), would have been appropriate for some of the afternoons, in which participants could have read newspaper articles, stories, literature or poetry about Chinese history and have discussions and reports. Daniel suggested, “more could have been done for reading in Chinese, even if reading the Chinese national newspaper or articles and talking about them on the patio after lunch or something” (Interview, April 2013).

Furthermore, even though they wrote journals, all participants thought this type of writing was too informal and “not really graded” (Interviews, April, 2013). So they felt it did not help them improve their Chinese writing skills as much as they would have hoped. When I probed further into this issue, participants stated that while they liked the internship format of the program and all the speaking and listening they were doing, they thought more “traditional classroom” aspects could be incorporated into the in-country portion of the program to make it more successful and rigorous.

Alice reflected: “I liked the internship and the activities and excursions, but in the afternoons after lunch, on the days we were in class, I thought we could’ve had a class about Chinese grammar or something. Our program director could have held a class or a lecture, or we could’ve had some of the Chinese students come in and talk to us more formally about their jobs, the history of Beijing (Interview, April 2013).

Therefore, although the participants liked the unique experience of learning through internships, they craved more structure and aspects of classroom instruction to which they were accustomed.

### **Perceived Cultural Acquisition**

When it came to the participants’ perception of cultural acquisition from the Chinese Studies Program, all of them reported that they improved their knowledge of the Chinese culture. Prior to departure to China, I asked them to rate their level of knowledge of the Chinese culture. Daniel and Angie gave a self-rating of “very good” while Alice rated her knowledge at “fair.” Heather rated hers between “excellent” and “good.” When I asked this question at the end of the program (Interview, April 2013), all the participants reported a higher level of knowledge of the Chinese culture. Daniel rated his

cultural knowledge as “good to excellent,” while Alice and Angie rated theirs as “good,” followed by Heather as “excellent.”

I explored the participants’ opinions as to the specific aspects of the program they felt had helped them improve their knowledge of Chinese culture. Angie considered her personal experiences with the culture and language to be very informative. She suggested that various aspects of the internship program were “useful real-life experiences with the language and culture”:

I enjoyed going to the same internship experience throughout the semester. I liked one day when I took a metro ride with my internship supervisor as she delivered the products to her clients. She helped me with new vocabulary words and the intonation and inflection of Chinese sounds. My Chinese co-workers were always so gracious when they made corrections to my mistakes. [. . .] I felt comfortable with these people, especially the older Chinese people who helped at work. There’s an established tradition here already with this program [. . .] it’s very special. The connection between USA and China...we are treated as friends, and we are welcomed into their lives and their hearts.

In the in-country internship interview (Interview, January 2013), Alice and Heather gave similar examples of how their knowledge of the Chinese culture improved—program internships, interacting with “real” Chinese people, conversational opportunities with native speakers in which “cultural differences between the U.S. and Chinese could be discussed at length” (Interview, April 2013) and “going to co-worker’s houses for invited meals” (Interview, April 2013). Michael specifically mentioned the international internship and how the experience immersed me in Chinese culture and tradition through “business relations, taxes, and customs with client-proprietor interactions.”

However, it was Daniel who brought up the interesting concept of “access” to Chinese culture. Even though he told me how he appreciated the warm and genuine welcome that the Chinese Studies Program group had received in Beijing, he wondered how he would be received if he were “just an American” traveling in Beijing:

Everyone in the Chinese Studies Program was very welcoming here, but really, I think we had a special inside look at Chinese people. . . I kept thinking, “If I was just here by myself, not affiliated with the Chinese Studies Program and no one knew I was coming, would these people be this nice or welcoming to me?” [pause] I think on the surface, yes, they would be nice, but would’ve I been so openly invited to have snacks and a drink in their office if not for this program? I highly doubt it. The structure of the program and the close connection between the faculty and staff with the internship is great, but I think we have to realize that Chinese people—or any people—don’t usually welcome foreigners so openly. I think we gained greater access to Chinese people and their culture as a result of participating in the program.

[. . .] We were able to just go into Chinese organizations and interact with their clients and their staff; we participated in class with Chinese professors and students, and we were taken on visits and to museums and got invited to co-worker’s houses right away, which I don’t think would happen so easily. How close can I get to this experience and really getting to know Chinese people again in China, if not on an organized program? I think it would take a long time—certainly longer than the few weeks we’ve been here. [hesitation] This makes me appreciate what I’ve learned here even more because I think it was such a rare opportunity and look into the lifestyle and culture of the Chinese people.

### **Perceived Academic and Professional Development**

The participants were also forthcoming about their perceived academic and professional development as a result of their activities in the Chinese Studies program. For Alice, the experience seemed to build her confidence for future academic endeavors in Chinese studies: “I think in my future Chinese classes, I will be able to understand more of what is going on in the class. I think I might have a little more confidence to express my thoughts in class, too” (Interview, April 2013).

However, Adam, Lisa and Elizabeth reported that while they did improve their Chinese and reaffirmed their interest in possibly incorporating Chinese in a future career, they all stated that the internships were the single most influential part of the experience. Angie mentioned that in the future she would have liked to do an internship at the local museum in order to gain some insight into aspects of Chinese culture and art. Elizabeth summed up her opinions on the professional aspect of the internships:

I liked my “internship” and I think I learned a lot of Chinese and about the culture, but realistically, is it an “internship”? I don’t want to work in an office for my entire career, so maybe more effort could be made to tailor internships more to our major. There really weren’t any efforts to lead us to internships in which we could develop our professional skills in our majors. I’d have rather at least had a chance at a cultural, somewhat more professional internship related to my interests or studies.

Overall, all the participants reported that they would have preferred to have spent more time in the internships. If there was one area to improve the internship experience, they felt it should be more attuned to their academic and career goals.

### **General Reactions to Returning Home**

In the in country interview (April, 2013), I asked the participants how they felt about ending the program, leaving China and returning to the United States. They had mixed reactions. All the participants said they were “sad” to leave the Beijing, yet reported mixed feelings of nostalgia, relief and determination. Angie was “sad because I am leaving such friendly people whom I am just getting to know” (Interview, April 2013). Lisa had sorrowful feelings for the end of the trip, but also felt some relief:

I am sad to leave because I had been looking forward to this for so long and it just went so fast. However, the dynamics of our Chinese Studies program were sort of odd and I think that has been more of a shock than the Chinese culture. The “culture” of our program—we were together a lot outside of our internships in classes—it started to drive me (and others) nuts. We did have independent time,

which I liked. I'm used to being on my own a lot. As soon as I met the group, I was interested in it because I like to observe others and group dynamic would be interesting, but I had no idea how fast being together in this group would wear on me. I think each student is nice, but being together a lot was at times difficult to handle.

During my observations of participants during the in-country portion of this study, as well as during the interviews, all participants mentioned to me at one time or another that they needed a break or separation from other students and the resident halls. Daniel and Alice suggested that participants should be better prepared during program orientation since the group is together numerous hours for the duration of the program. In fact, Angie and Elizabeth suggested that more ice-breaker and team-building exercises be completed during orientation and classes to build more camaraderie among the participants before they begin their internships.

Furthermore, Angie expressed her sadness at the end of the program, but was also determined to return to China. In a conversation with me after the in-country interview (Interview, April 2013), she took a nostalgic look back on her experience with the program and shared her thoughts with me:

I can't decide if this trip is too short or just right. On one hand, I'm ready to go home, see my friends and family, have summer break, but at the same time, I'd like to stay longer or maybe travel in China more, or, like we've talked about, maybe have an optional extension of the program to go to a another Chinese university in another city or something for 3 to 4 weeks ...I'd totally do that. [. . .] It's so urban here that I think maybe if we had the chance to spend a length of time in a small Chinese city, like maybe Zhangzhou or Yantai, it would just top off the program. [. . .]

Angie went on to note, personally, "I could probably handle it financially, if receiving academic credits, because, well, I'm already over here. I spent all that money on the flight, and I'm here, and I don't have to adjust again to the country and hearing



Chinese all the time, so I'd kind of like to stay a few more weeks, but not here in Beijing, but somewhere else, in a medium-sized city. I also would like being more on my own or with other students, but just having more time on my own to explore a city and become part of the culture". Alice and Lisa stated specifically that the experience would have been much more difficult for them if they had been abroad for an entire year. When I asked them how they thought they would react to being abroad for a year-long program, both projected that they would have been very homesick for their family and friends. In addition, both said they preferred this semester program, particularly for a first-time abroad, as opposed to going on a more long-term program. The short duration was one of the reasons they chose to participate in this program.

Finally, in the post interview (Interview, May 2013), the participants expressed their apprehension about returning home to the United States and what they felt could be the biggest challenge for them upon return. Daniel was not looking forward to "getting back to a schedule I make for myself and following it—it was so easy to let someone else plan my exciting days here—now it's back to the same old routine" (Interview, May 2013). Elizabeth projected that she would be "homesick for China" and "its incredible people"; she was not happy with having to return to "100-degree weather" (Interview, May 2013). Michael did not necessarily foresee any challenges in returning home, but he was not looking forward to the long trip back home, after it seemed to him that they had just arrived. For Heather, the differences in climate and scenery would prove to be her biggest challenges in returning home:

Going back to United States and Germany after this semester is going to be dreadful. This trip wasn't long enough for me to really ever get truly homesick. Beijing is so welcoming and beautiful that if I had any thoughts of homesickness,

it would only last for a few minutes and would quickly pass. If I got a little down, I could say, “I’m only here for a few weeks and enjoy the cool, weather.”

### **Participants’ Perspectives: Re-entry**

When asked about their perspective on re-entry and their initial reaction to returning to the United States, all participants were happy to see their family and friends and remarked that it “felt good” (Alice) to return to the conveniences and comforts of home; however, all participants (some more than others) indicated a reverse homesickness for China. Angie had many of these feelings but, in fact, noticed how odd she felt not being with the other participants and interns:

It was good to be back home and sleeping in my own bed, but I kept looking for the people I had been with almost nonstop for a semester. I wondered what I was going to eat for meals. Then remembered I had to fix my own. I listened to what people were saying and understood right away—that was a relief because I found myself not thinking about translating what I was hearing (Interview, May 2013).

Meanwhile, Heather simply stated she missed China, and Michael was relieved to be home after a long, tiring trip back home. It was, however, Lisa who experienced the most severe reactions upon returning to the U.S.:

I am annoyed and bored. I thought that it would be really nice to get back to the States, but it’s not. The idea has set that is over. I also talk a whole lot about the trip as soon as I got back and when people aren’t that interested, I find it annoying. I’m actually kind of relieved to answer this question because at least I feel you are interested in my experience and maybe someone else will read it.

### **Reverse Culture Shock**

Another re-entry question I wanted to investigate is whether the participants thought they had experienced “reverse culture shock” upon return to the U.S. However,

before asking them to answer this, I asked them how they would define the term—I found their answers to be very intriguing. The “definitions” were, in fact, directly related to how participants felt during their own re-entry experiences. For Daniel, “reverse culture shock” was

The feeling a person has when he returns to his own culture and world of comfort after he has been out of his comfort zone for a period of time. He leaves the new ‘life style’ and embraces his old. Then, he questions that maybe the new lifestyle might have some merits that he had not thought of before.

Numerous times during the study, Daniel had reported that he was out of his comfort zone in certain situations in China, particularly when several Chinese nationals expected him to speak in Chinese. For Elizabeth, “re-entry shock” meant “returning home to discover that all the things that irritated you about your country before you left now irritate you ten times more” (Interview, May 2013). In fact, Elizabeth communicated that she felt irritated by the U.S. before she left and upon re-entry, she felt much more irritated by the American culture and politics. Alice described it as “having an episode where you can't believe you actually live here and have to stay here for a fairly long period of time and you preferred being in the foreign country” (Interview, May 2013).

In a similar fashion, Angie defined “reverse culture shock” in part with her own experience as a background—she did report having trouble coming to the realization that she was back in the U.S. and her abroad experience was over. Finally, Adam expressed that “it is ‘shock’ that one experiences about one’s former surroundings after returning to them and having seen a totally different lifestyle and having an altered perspective” (Interview, May 2013). Adam perceived that he did return home with an “altered perspective” of the world and humanity in general.

The participants had mixed reactions when asked whether they actually thought they were experiencing reverse culture shock upon re-entry to the U.S. In particular, Heather answered affirmatively, stating that she was upset that the international experience went so quickly, and she had anticipated the experience for months before:

I waited so long for this trip and once I got back home, I realized that I would be doing absolutely nothing for the rest of the summer. I was annoyed at most everything in the U.S., not necessarily because something was legitimately annoying, but because I didn't want to be here. I got upset and a little depressed.

Lisa reported that she did not perceive any “shock” per se, but she “sincerely missed China” (Interview, May 2013). Michael stated that he did not perceive any reverse culture shock in his experiences, but rather observed himself making comparisons between the U.S. and China.

When I asked participants whether they found themselves making comparisons between the Chinese culture and their own, they all answered with a resounding “yes.” Most commented on their first re-entry impressions of American stores and how food is not as fresh, of lesser quality, pre-packaged, and in larger quantities. In particular, Alice found herself comparing life in U.S. with life in China:

I miss the wide variety of food and desserts in the grocery stores, “healthy” breakfast cereals with chocolate in them, and wide spread concerns on health.

Heather wrote that she had confirmed her preference in lifestyle: “yes, I really miss China. I've never had a great love for American culture, always preferring what I've experienced in Germany and China. Elizabeth said it confirmed the suspicions I already held” (Interview, May 2013). She continued the notion of comparison between China and American habits:

Yes, I'm comparing them a lot. Going back to the grocery store was difficult because I really wanted some fresh farm-made 酸菜 [Sauerkraut] and a good, cheap bottle of beer but it was not to be found here."

### **Re-entry Challenges**

I asked participants how they felt about "re-entry challenges." When faced with the challenge of feeling "boredom" in the U.S. after the re-entry, Elizabeth and Lisa reported this to be a "strong" challenge. Elizabeth stated, "There's nothing to do here. I'm bored out of my mind" (Interview, May 201):

The first few days were different because I was going to visit other family and keeping busy, but once I got back to my house, it was like falling into a black hole of boredom, I have nothing to do that I want to do, and I don't want to think about China because it'll just make me think of what I was doing when I was there, and I'll miss it.

Both participants mentioned that it was particularly difficult to return home during the hot summer months when there was no busy college semester in session. Daniel and Adam did not find "boredom" to be a significant challenge in their re-entry experiences.

Furthermore, Heather and Lisa also expressed that they believed they felt "strong" reverse "home" sickness after re-entry. Heather brought forth that she really missed just about everything about China and could not wait to go back. Lisa missed the people she had met at her internships and on excursions and some of the other group participants. Angie reported a "fair" amount of reverse "home" sickness and wrote that she missed the unstressed lifestyle that she experienced in Beijing. Michael did not report feeling this challenge in re-entry (Interview, May 2013).

The re-entry challenge of feelings of alienation provided some interesting feedback from the participants. When asked whether they felt some alienation from their home culture, family and friends or daily life or whether they began to see faults in their home society that they never noticed before, the participants' responses were mixed. Daniel, who reported having a very strong sense of American pride before the program in China, Reported that he was still very proud to be an American of Chinese decent. He noted, "I'm from a generation that is proud to be American" (Interview, May 2013).

Heather and Michael had reported negative opinions toward American politics and culture prior to departure; upon re-entry, they stated that while these feelings existed before departure, their views were reaffirmed after the experience. Michael shared, "I have become much more conscious of differences and similarities since my time in China, only as a result of having something beyond the media or imagination to compare it to. These comparisons have not been negative, just observant" (Interview, May 2013).

Alice and Adam expressed a fair degree of challenge in applying their new knowledge and skills from China. They both stated that it was difficult to go from an intense Chinese experience to little or no contact with China back in the U.S. Alice brought up that: "I feel like I'm losing the Chinese I learned and I want to speak to someone in Chinese but there is no one to speak to" (Interview, May 2013). Angie did not know how to remedy being away from China; she felt that her language skills were dwindling after "such a great immersion experience" (Interview, May 2013). She had made plans to read Chinese newspapers or news from China online. Lisa felt that she would really have to make an effort to expose herself to Chinese during the summer to

keep her skills fresh, while Adam was exposed to Chinese on a daily basis at his international internship, felt lost without. When asked whether they felt they had experienced any challenges with changes in their relationships at home with friends or family, none of the participants reported any such challenges. Four of the eight participants remarked that the program was too short of a time abroad to have significantly changed any of their relationships.

### **Perceived Effects on the Participants' Lives**

After just a semester abroad, how much change in their lives did the participants think had occurred? All participants reported that they felt encouraged to do more international travel and all but Heather said they felt more self-confidence in general. For Heather, a seasoned traveler, this trip was special in her heart, but it was not her first or only trip abroad, so she reported:

The changes in my life are not significant to me--I have traveled abroad before and knew the differences. My thoughts and memories have changed because I visited China. In quiet times, I like to revisit, in my mind, those experiences to enjoy them once again.

She also mentioned that she felt more confident in her abilities in Chinese as a result of the trip. According to Angie, her biggest adjustment upon re-entry to the U.S. was simply “being by [her]self again”:

Each day in class, we checked in to see what the other person was doing. There were activities, thoroughly enjoyable, that one just went along without thinking much about it. It was very odd to leave the fellow interns and travel by myself and it seemed strange to be home without them.

Similarly, Elizabeth and Michael reported minimal to small changes to their lives at the re-entry phase of the study. Elizabeth described no major readjustments for her re-

entry back to the U.S. Michael believed his viewpoint was not “changed,” but rather certain areas were “reaffirmed”:

My sentiments that humans everywhere are “just humans” were reaffirmed. But concerning major changes, I suppose I was able to better understand human behavior.

[. . .] From the Chinese, I learned a little about being observant—before commenting on any truths I saw, I observed. Now, I feel I point the finger less and am less quick to jump to conclusions or judge.

[. . .] I feel more comfortable in my frame and with myself as a person. [. . .] I’ve realized my ability to easily adapt, my integrity to remain headstrong for what I believe and value. I have a new-found open-mindedness to new people, ways of life and situations. )

However, it was again Lisa who perceived the greatest change and strongest effect on her life:

It made me really want to go back and learn Chinese better (gasp). I would really like to find a job that would afford me with the opportunity to travel to other countries or at least have enough money to do so. My parents commented that I look different also, and they said I matured a bit, but I'm not so sure.

When asked whether she could pinpoint a personal attitude or characteristic that had changed as a result of the international internship experience, she remarked:

Before I left I was concerned that I wouldn't be able to move away from my friends and family and be happy and for some of the time in China, I felt really overwhelmed by being there and thought that maybe I was right that I was destined to remain in the U.S.. But as I look back over my experiences in China, I remember most of it with a lot of happiness and now that I'm back in U.S., I can't imagine staying here for the rest of my life.

Furthermore, she described how her perspective on the U.S. had changed and how she viewed certain behaviors by Americans:

I'm more defensive about China and other people who would not be considered part of the majority. When Americans are talking negatively about the China or other foreigners or minorities, it annoys me more than it has previously and the person who said it seems very ignorant to me.



This is a very different viewpoint from the one she held prior to departure in which she did not have a “pro-China” perspective. Lisa also stated that the process of speaking about her international experience was an outlet for her to share her experience with someone:

Funny as it may sound, it is good to share my experience in this interview...I got back and my life has changed so much...these changes are so evident to me, but my friends and family think it’s “just me” and they don’t seem to notice what a big deal that trip was for me.

### **Perceived Influence on Personal Development**

The program’s influence on the personal development of its participants was noticeable, particularly since the program was only a semester long. All eight participants recounted that they believed they had a greater ability to empathize with others before making any judgments, were more flexible and able to adjust to changes and take more risks; therefore, they believed they had matured as a result of the experience. As a result of all the different social, academic, and professional situations which they encountered in China all the participants believed they had a greater willingness to take on roles and tasks to which they were unaccustomed. Adam and Alice both designated the “improvement of observation skills” as a benefit of their experience in China. Adam, in particular, observed the interactions between his interns and Chinese nationals. These observations, particularly of the Chinese, led him to note that, as a result of the program, he felt more surely that common bonds unite all human beings.

When asked whether the experience in China had any influence on their desire to travel or study abroad in the future, all participants gave a resounding “YES!” As stated earlier, Heather was already a seasoned traveler, so this experience did not appear to affect her desire to travel as much as the other more novice travelers as she shared:

I am a traveler by nature [. . .] I've traveled a lot in my lifetime and I plan to keep on doing so. I'm not sure if I will "study" abroad again with an organized program, but I will travel abroad again, I hope. It would be really neat to do another internship abroad before I graduate or maybe after.

Michael revealed that the program had simply reaffirmed what he knew before the trip:

I have always wanted to travel, live and study abroad even before going to Beijing, but I think the experience there just added to my curiosity. Yes, I will travel abroad again and I am planning to study abroad again next year! Just not sure where yet.

Angie emphasized that she became more aware of the opportunities in life that are open to her. While she had always believed she would go to graduate school after her undergraduate degree was completed, the experience in China made her realize just how much is out there to be discovered in the world, and she was more determined than ever to explore her educational options, most likely out of the U.S. As for the subject of international internships and study abroad, Angie noted:

I want to travel abroad so much more. I see what I'm missing now [. . .] the great food, the cool experiences. Yes, as a result of the Chinese Studies program, I have increased my desire A LOT to travel abroad again. I am going to graduate, so I probably won't study abroad again, but travel extensively and for longer periods of time, yes! I also want to work abroad again.

All the participants specified that their experience with the program made a lasting positive contribution to their lives, while no participant suggested that the program had left a lasting negative effect.

When asked about the effect that participation in the Chinese Studies program had had on their career paths or aspirations, all eight participants believed that the skills they acquired abroad would (positively) influence their career choices. After the experience

abroad, they had developed a new interest in a career direction—everyone declared a desire to include either Chinese, international relations, or the study of cultures in their future careers.

### **Summary of the Perceived Effects of Study Abroad and International Internships**

Overall, the group indicated that their lives were greatly influenced by participating in the Chinese Studies program. All the participants declared that they felt the experience in China had positively contributed to their personal, cultural, academic, career, and linguistic development. Every student believed he or she had become a more open-minded, well-rounded person who was more sensitive to diversity and sought to learn more about diverse cultures and languages. In areas of personal development, the participants mentioned that they felt they had “grown as a person” (Angie, Interview, May 2013) and could better handle new situations and adventures.

They revealed that their desire to travel and learn languages was not necessarily changed, but it was definitely reaffirmed. They all had a prior interest and always had a strong desire to learn Chinese. However, the participants indicated that this study abroad/international internship program reinforced their commitment to learn the language and travel where it is spoken. All eight students believed that participation in the program motivated them to improve their Chinese so they could communicate better “next time.” All anticipated traveling to a China again in the future.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study on the Chinese Studies program have revealed many details about the participants’ perspectives on all phases of the program, from pre-

departure orientation to their sentiments after studying abroad. The participants thoroughly discussed their perceptions of their learning experiences during the program. They indicated that their learning experience in China had been very different from that of any class they had attended in the past. The participants reported that they were “learning from their experiences” (in-country internship interviews), including through the internships and contacts with Chinese nationals. In the next chapter, I will discuss how the participants’ comments about their learning relate to the experiential learning theory and to previous research.

All eight participants revealed (in-country, re-entry and post-study) that their experiences abroad had positively influenced their personal, linguistic, cultural, social, and career development. They also gave many suggestions on how to improve the program, particularly in the organization and the structure of the program orientation. Therefore, the design of study abroad program, international internship and program evaluation and assessment will be discussed further in the next chapter. Also, although all the participants felt unprepared for the internship experiences, their feelings of culture shock were notable (slightly lower for Heather). What was somewhat of a shock to them was the amount of contact they had with each other. An interesting development arose when the participants discussed their interaction with their peers in the Chinese Studies program. All participants, at times, were frustrated with their internships, other participant interns and with having to spend so much time traveling to their internship placement site.

In order to uncover as much information as possible about the program and its participants, I sought out additional feedback from internship supervisors who had

experience with the program and who supervised the participants. Similar to the participants in this study, internship supervisor participants (from a different organizations) reported having a positive learning experience during the program, and stated that participation in the program improved their overall professional experience.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

According to Creswell (2002), the goal of the final segment of qualitative research is to interpret and make sense of the findings. This includes a review of how the research questions were answered, a brief discussion of the study's findings in regard to related literature, as well as the research implications and suggestions for further inquiry (Creswell, 2002). The final chapter of this study is focused on the culmination of study finding in light of the participants' international internship experience through the Chinese Studies Program in Beijing, China. First, the international internship features that were coded and analyzed in this study will be discussed. Next, the international internship features will be discussed through the framework of Kolb's (1984) model of Experiential Learning. There are a number of limitations to this study that are presented. Lastly, the chapter will outline implications for practice, future research, and conclusions of the study.

Interviews before, during, and after the China program asked about participants' motivations and goals for studying abroad, their perspectives on their learning (e.g., potential effects of studying abroad and possible culture shock), and their views on selected aspects of the program (such as, pre-departure orientation and international internship placements). Responses were grouped into themes. I will identify and interpret the most important results in this study, and evaluate these results in light of previous research. In addition, I will discuss the possible limitations to this research, implications for future programs and suggestions for future research.

### **Chinese Studies Program**

This section will describe the features of the Chinese Studies Program (CSP) and the extent to which they influenced participants cross-cultural competence, attitudes, beliefs, values, and perceived purpose of cross cultural vocational experience.

Throughout the analysis, the common theme is that most of the features did not work in isolation to improve the students' experience. The shared experience of the internships, internship supervisors, classes, housing, and study trips combined to enhance the overall growth of participants. Even when there were negative features, their potential impact was reduced due to the overall strength of the program features. The key to participants' growth was the enthusiasm of the students and their commitment to the international internship experience.

The academic features of the CSP both positively and negatively impacted participants' experiences. One academic feature that positively impacted students' was the Chinese Studies program curriculum of courses on topics such as China in the Global Economy. This course aimed to help students understand the Chinese economy in the era of globalization and the interaction between China and the rest of world. The major theme focused on the process of China's reform and open-door policy, how China interacts with the outside world in trade, finance, investment, energy, reform of international economic institutions and so on, and the implications of Chinese economic reform on the global economy. The common response from students was that this course provided them with the tools to bring back to their internship to understand the culture, communication, and office etiquette to navigate the Chinese work environment.

On the other hand, one academic feature that negatively impacted the students' experience was the intense academic rigor of the course work. The sheer volume of attending classes, completing readings and assignments weighed heavily on some participants. However, all participants reported that the academic topics and discussions combined with their internship experience helped them think more deeply about their time in the program. They in fact were using this academic knowledge to enhance their context as global citizens.

Examination of the participant stories indicated a level of connectives that provided the foundation for the students to build in layers of empathy, understanding, to address their own biases, and to challenge themselves to step outside their own context to grow as a global citizen. This learning occurred in both formal (ways like, academic coursework and internships) and in informal activities (such as cultural explorations, subway rides, lunches and dinners with Chinese nationals and co-workers, scavenger hunts, and social/sporting events) that allowed students to engage at their own pace. The study findings support that the culmination of these activities positively influenced participants' international experience.

### **Culture Shock**

Do students foresee experiencing any culture shock and once in Beijing, China, how do the participants believe they experience culture shock, if at all? How do they make meaning of culture shock? Prior to departure, the participants were asked whether they anticipated experiencing any culture shock once in China. In previous research on studying abroad programs, "culture shock" (Oberg, 1960; Chen, 1992; Pedersen, 1995; Jurasek, Lamson, & O'Maley, 1996; Archangeli, 1999; Engle & Engle, 1999; Kohls,



2001; Martin & Nakayama, 2001; Brandt & Manley, 2002; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002; Montabaur, 2002; and Tange, 2005) was one of the most popular themes in study abroad research. However, there was no previous research that looked at cultural shock through an international internship experience. Nevertheless, it was a considerable, emergent topic in the findings of this study. Seven of the eight participants indicated that they expected to experience severe culture shock on the program. All participants believed they would experience a mild form of cultural “adjustment” in China, including the differences in food, language barriers and different habits in communication (pre-departure interview). They did foresee that they would be “shocked” by the Chinese culture. Heather, however, did not expect to have any level of culture shock in China. In fact, she reported that he was looking forward to the change in scenery and “mentality” (Pre-departure interview).

During the international internship experience, the participants were asked whether they believed they were in fact experiencing culture shock. Data reveal that Michael and Elizabeth experienced a few instances of “cultural difference,” but they labeled nothing as strongly as a “shock” (In-country interview). However, after some adjustment, they indicated that these small differences had become more “quirky,” and they became quite fond of them (In-country interview). Alice reported that she felt as if she were experiencing the most difficulty (among her peers) in the adjustment to China. At times, she did struggle with feeling “very different” from her Chinese colleagues (mostly in height, clothing and language skills) (In-country Interview). It was Heather who reported the least difficulty adjusting to China, as she stated that she had “no unexpected difficulties of any kind” (In-country Interview). These findings are consistent

with Kohls (2001), Montabaur (2002) and Tange (2005), as these researchers found that the “honeymoon” stage, or the initial fascination with the host culture, lasts well past the first month. Therefore, according to these researchers, the participants of the Chinese Studies program did experience some level of culture shock because their stay in China was of significant period. One question that was not answered as a result of this study (or from any previous research reviewed) was, if participants do not leave the “honeymoon” stage of cultural adjustment during a study abroad program, are they truly able to learn about all dimensions of the host culture? The answer to this question is not easily reached. The review of previous research has revealed that difficulties in this debate exist because researchers (Pedersen, 1995; Kohls, 2001; Martin & Nakayama, 2001; Montabaur, 2002; Tange, 2005) disagree on the duration and order of each phase of culture shock and cultural adjustment. Each researcher has his or her own model for the specific phases of culture shock and for the duration of each phase of shock. In terms of the Chinese Studies program, one researcher’s model, Martin & Nakayama (2001) may found that culture shock is possible in this study abroad program, while another model (e.g., Tange, 2005; Kohls, 2001) may indicate that the participants do not spend enough time in the host culture to get past the initial “honeymoon” phase. Therefore, in study abroad programs such as the Chinese Studies program, the issue of culture shock is up for debate and more research needs to be conducted to reach more concrete conclusions.

The participants also reported that they experienced more of a wonder about the Chinese culture than shock. They found themselves comparing and contrasting Chinese habits and culture with the American counterparts, a notion which supports Kim (1995) and Wilkinson (1998a, 1998b). Some participants stated that they found the Chinese

culture to be more similar to the American culture than different. One day in the middle of the program (Informal Conversation, In-Country Interview), Eric made a rather important statement at the dinner: He stated, “Chinese people are humans.” While this was an important statement, it brought about an interesting conversation. It brought to light that the study abroad and international internship experiences “humanized” the Chinese to these American college students. Instead of thinking of the Chinese and their culture from excerpts of TV or a textbook, after having the experience in Beijing, the participant had formed relationships with Chinese people in the work environment. Therefore, instead of being intimidated by the Chinese or by speaking Chinese in front of native speakers, the participant indicated that he was becoming more at ease (observations and informal conversations).

Along similar lines, the participants also reported that they had developed a more open-minded approach to thinking about other cultures and had gained a greater sense of independence from their home culture. As they negotiated the similarities and differences of the Chinese culture, they began to recognize both the good points and shortcomings of their home culture. Since all participants successfully managed their encounters without serious culture shock, they turned these instances into positive events in their life, which is an action in support of Kim (1995) and Wilkinson (1998a, 1998b).

As seen with the participants in this study, cultural adjustment and culture shock are very personal experiences. The level of “shock” and the duration of the adjustment depends on many individual factors for the participants: their prior exposure to diversity, prior trips abroad, level of independence from friends and family, open-minded viewpoints, flexibility in lifestyle, personality and so on (Sideli, 2009). ). Much is also

dependent upon the details of the program in which these participants were enrolled (Sideli, 2009). ). The participant who is surrounded by Americans and/or English speakers and lives in a resident hall in which he or she only speaks English for the entire time abroad, will perhaps experience less culture shock than someone who travels abroad alone to participate in a program in which he or she is surrounded by the host culture and host nationals. Which all participants noted that the international internship provided greater exposure to the Chinese culture and native Chinese speakers.

Participants indicated that having the other American students at their lodging and the opportunity to talk about their experiences and difficulties was a “comfort” (In-country Interview). These comments by participants brought about an interesting look at the “stranger group.” Previous research<sup>132</sup> (De Ley, 1975; Herman & Schild, 1961; Nash & Tarr, 1976; and Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b) has shown that many study abroad participants cling to members of their own culture or language (“stranger group”) as a natural coping mechanism to culture shock, or as a technique of avoiding individual contact with the host culture (De Ley, 1975). Because of their interaction with the “stranger group,” many participants make a choice to interact with people of their own culture and/or language while abroad, and may never have optimal exposure to the host culture. Several studies, including Herman and Schild (1961) and Nash and Tarr (1976), have cautioned against the power of the stranger group, which has been found to negatively influence the attitudes of each individual member of the group. If the general attitude of the stranger group is negative toward the host culture, research (De Ley, 1975; Herman & Schild, 1961; Nash & Tarr, 1976; and Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b) has found that the members of the group follow the negativity. Colleges and universities frequently

send groups of students abroad with other participants from their home campuses.

However, no research has examined the effects of the participants in the group on one another, and the notion of a “forced” stranger group in these situations.

In this study, all participants initially found comfort in traveling abroad with a group of Americans. However, after several weeks together in China, all the participants experienced varying levels of frustration with the group members. In this study, Heather experienced difficulty with the “forced” stranger group. Even if she tried to distance herself from the other participants, she was forced to spend more time with her American counterparts than she would have liked through the classroom and resident hall. By the end of the trip, Heather admitted that she was “finished” with the other participants and she had been ready, by week four, to “be on [her] own” (post interview). Because of this, she took steps to distance herself from the other participants. She went off by herself and explored Beijing and spent more time with her internship colleagues. From her statements (observations and interviews), near the end of the experience, it was clear that she was much happier exploring the Chinese culture by herself than with the group.

Angie was content with having a “good balance” of time with American and Chinese people (In-country Interview). She indicated that she would have been overwhelmed if she had been in China by herself or on an internship program alone. She looked to her fellow participants for conversation and discussions about their experiences. Meanwhile, Elizabeth and Michael experienced both comfort and frustration with their peers. In their in-country interviews, they reported looking forward to lunch and dinner with the other Chinese Study participants because they could talk about their days. They also stated that they had “formed friendships” (In-country Interview) with

each other and with other participants. They did report a few moments of frustration with the other group members. However, they remained generally positive about the experience.

### **Emerging Aspects of the Experiential Learning Theory**

How do the participants view their learning on this program, particularly in regard to learning the Chinese language and culture? What do participants perceive they learn on this type of short-term abroad program in which instruction happens in the classroom and provides a non-classroom based with internships? The participants in this study were also asked to reflect upon their learning during the program, particularly in regard to learning the Chinese language and culture in an environment that was non-classroom based (internships). In fact, one of the most insightful revelations of this study occurred when the participants described what, how and why they were learning during their experience abroad. Upon my own analysis of this data, I was struck by how the participants talked about their learning process, particularly on the program's internships. A specific instance occurred during an in-country interview, when Lisa discussed how she had learned from her internships in Beijing:

Unlike the classroom at home, we can actually just go out and talk to people. The first afternoon at my internship was really difficult for me because I didn't understand a lot of the Chinese language and the differences between Chinese and American culture. I was sort of overwhelmed, I guess, and a little afraid because I felt kind of stupid. But, I mean, everyone there was really nice and tried to talk about other things, like they asked me questions about how I liked Chinese food and asked questions about the U.S. [pause] so I would be part of the conversation. It made me feel better. So, as I went back there more and more, I learned more of the vocabulary and Chinese culture and how not to be afraid to ask questions.

When asked if she could elaborate on how this specific internship was so “unlike the classroom.” She responded at length:

Sure. I mean, the only thing I've ever done in a college Chinese class that even remotely compares to these internships is like an end-of-the-semester skit or something. Something that is prepared and rehearsed, like to relate it to an internship here, like you and your group are given a topic and you create a skit. [pause] They are funny and stuff, and we get a chance to speak, but, come on [. . .] it's rehearsed, and we usually read off a paper [pause] Well, that's how I see this experience as being different. For the skit in class, the group has to act out a "real-life" scenario. [pause] It's, um [pause] I guess, trying to make it seem like a real-life scenario, but it just isn't. There's really nothing they can do to make it "real."

Well, here, it's totally real. You have to think on your toes. There's no rehearsing—you can try to prepare. Like after that first day, I was kind of frustrated, so I went back to my room and looked up the words I know I didn't know and simple stuff like the Chinese word for the bathroom and copier. I was really frustrated that I didn't know such a simple words. So, I looked up a bunch of words and also got the idea to bring a little note pad to the internship to jot down words.

As this study's participants began to indicate more and more how much they were "learning from their experiences," "taking away from the internships," or "learning Chinese so much more in the 'real-life' setting than in a classroom," (paraphrase of all participants' reactions), I found myself recalling the discussion of the theory of experiential learning from previous studies. As a result, I did more research into the main principles of the theory and was able to apply it to many of the participants' perspectives of their learning.

Looking back at Lisa's statements (and other participants' statements), she indicated that she truly worked through the learning process according to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (as referenced in Figure 1, p. 26). She was an active participant in her learning of the Chinese language, culture and certain business norms. After she had an experience (e.g., being unaware of Chinese business vocabulary), she made observations during her internship and then analyzed and reflected upon what she was seeing, hearing and saying. Next, she used this information to develop new concepts

of what was the accepted vocabulary term or cultural cue. Finally, she was able to re-enter the internship for a new experience (with some prior knowledge), in which she tested her notions, and in the end, fine tuned her learning. These findings support previous research about the benefits of experiential learning and outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals (Archangeli, 1999; and Brecht & Robinson, 1995).

Lisa's statements about in-class versus in-country learning were crucial points as to why experiential learning can be so meaningful for most students. In a typical classroom situation in the United States, no matter how much educators try to simulate a real-life learning environment in foreign languages, everyone is aware that the class is not taking place in a country in which the language is spoken. Lisa indicated that she appreciated the practice of pretending like she was in a Chinese-speaking country, but she was consistently reminded that the activities were for class, not for "real." Keeton and Tate (1978) have offered some insight into the phenomenon of direct encounter with learning through experience:

[. . .] the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied [. . .]. It involves direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it. (p. 2)

In her statements, Lisa appeared to be more in touch with the realities being studied when she was participating in her internships as opposed to short skits or dialogues in the college classroom. Instead of just thinking about what she would do in a situation or the "encounter," she was able to act upon her observations with concrete learning experiences.



Furthermore, students who participate in experiential learning are given constant feedback, which they can use to further their concepts of what they are learning (as referenced in Table #). Kolb (1984) indicates that feedback is often the missing link when students do not learn, as educational “ineffectiveness could be traced ultimately to a lack of adequate feedback processes” (p. 22). The participants in this study stated that they had “constant feedback” in their learning. Lisa, in fact, discussed in her in-country interview, why she thought she “learned better” on the program versus in a typical college classroom in the United States:

Unlike the classroom [U.S.], here, I’m not speaking with students whose Chinese is mediocre at best; I’m talking with real Chinese people, who correct me, give me new words and I’m learning the correct lingo while performing tasks. I don’t know, I also feel like I’m remembering it better. Like, at home in Chinese, I’d have to make flashcards and write out the words and really make an effort to study them. Here, I just hear the word and it seems to stick better, I’m not sure if it’s because I’m using the words or if it’s because it’s immersion or what, but it seems to be working for me.

[. . .] It’s more memorable, too. In 10 years, if I look back upon my Chinese courses, I probably wouldn’t remember a random semester-end paper topic I picked for a class in basically any college course, but my experiences here in Beijing...I will never forget.

In addition, Angie reported similar findings when she discussed her learning on the program internships. Below is a conversation I had with Angie during our in-country interview about the program internship. First, she explained how she got over her over analysis of language when she was trying to speak during the internships and activities during the program:

[Angie:] I’ve always thought about how or if I would communicate well in China, not only in a class, but in everyday life in China. I didn’t know if I would freeze up or stumble or make any sense at all. What would I do if I didn’t understand? But, when I got here, I realized that Chinese people are humans. For the most part, they are friendly, and I mean, especially here at my internship, they are

amazing to talk to. They let us just speak; they help us “get it out”. I may not be able to say exactly what I want, but I will find a way to say most of what I want to say and if it’s not perfect, I’m so busy trying to keep up with the conversation that I don’t get stuck on one word.

[Angie:] I didn’t really want to volunteer to speak unless it was like a requirement. If I had to talk on and on about something, I didn’t want to speak. But here, we are basically forced to, which is part of the reason why I signed up for this program. I want to speak Chinese and understand Chinese and while I was getting better in my classes, it was a slow process and I just couldn’t get over the “over thinking” of speaking Chinese. So, I figured this program seemed kind of “sink or swim”, so “下沉或游泳” [there you have it].

Next, I asked Angie whether she thought she was in a lot of “sink or swim”

situations during her experiences in the program. She explained:

You never know from one day to the next, from one minute to the next, what sort of activity you will be doing or what you will be asked or asked to do at your internship. That’s sort of the exciting thing about this program and exactly what I was looking for—it’s controlled to a point because we are with other American students and if we have any issues, someone who is of our culture and speaks our language is here and can help us, but we are also on our own a lot to well [. . .] I guess, discover, flounder around and just have at it. It’s exciting! I mean, one minute I’m eating a piece of Chinese pastry bread and with my “熱巧克力” [hot chocolate] for breakfast [. . .] looking at the amazing morning views in the comforts of the university and the next minute, I’m, you know, at my internship speaking Chinese. It’s quite an experience!

In the above statement, Angie referred to several experiences that she actively worked through; activities that added to her knowledge base about China. She was able to feel independent yet at ease because there was an on-site director, faculty, and students from the program.

Next, I further explored Angie’s views on her learning. I asked her whether she thought the structure of the program allowed the participants to learn Chinese differently from the way they learn in an American college classroom setting. She responded quickly and with great conviction, “Oh my, yes!” She continued:

I've never viewed learning Chinese in this way before—I'm like a little sponge soaking up new words and expressions every second I'm here, and with the correct pronunciation. Like at the 花商[florist] [pause] I never would've known how to greet someone and ask how to help them before. At the internship, I didn't know how to ask for help or how to ask to try something new. I not only know these words now, but after a few practices and times at my internships, I can use them in the right context and without hesitation.

Much like Lisa, Angie reported that at the beginning of the program, she was unaware of much of the proper vocabulary associated with the internship locations; however, as a result of the *experiences* in the internships and being able to make errors and learn from them, she was able to learn the appropriate Chinese expressions.

All participants reported similar stories. While they may not have known appropriate gestures and terminology in each business before they arrived in China, after their experiences in the internships, and given the chance to practice and “test out” their new skills, they learned quickly. Other participant-reported improvements in their usage of Chinese which employed the experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984) included: answering phones properly at the internship (Daniel, In-country Interview), giving directions to people unfamiliar with Beijing and being able to ask (Heather, In-country Interview) and answer questions rapidly in various tenses (Elizabeth, In-country Interview). These examples alone are not necessarily instances of the entire experiential learning theory, but rather a small step in the larger process. In my discussion with Michael about his learning processes, he indicated that he was frustrated that his internship supervisor had to help him with the appropriate phrases for answering the telephone. He did not realize that there was a very specific way to politely answer the phone at a business in China. He was equally frustrated that it took several practice attempts before he could succeed. However, after attempting the task, receiving feedback,

observing, and trying again (experiential learning theory, Kolb, 1984), he was able to succeed at this task and put the skill in his long-term memory. These examples of learning from experience during a non-traditional study abroad program support previous research, in particular Henthorne and Miller (2001), Hopkins (1999), Katula and Threnhauser (1999), and Montrose (2002).

These precise examples of a learner's process of experience (learner data collection), observation and reflection (data analysis) were present throughout each participant's learning, particularly during the international internships. In addition, the participants indicated that they began to form generalizations about accepted behaviors, gestures, cultural norms and language skills. They were then able to test these recently developed concepts in a new situation in order to gain knowledge. Therefore, with the emergence of numerous non-traditional study abroad programs, many of which employ the experiential learning theory and outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals, more research is needed.

### **Participants' Making Meaning of International Internships**

How do American undergraduate students who participate in an international internship make meaning of their experience in light of their own motivations and goals? Despite growing interest in study abroad programs, less than 1% of American college students choose to participate (Obst, Bhandari, & Witherell, 2007). Why then, did this group of individuals decide to go abroad, and why did they choose this program? Interviews reveal that these students made meaning of the internship as part of the study abroad experience for several reasons, including the fulfillment of academic coursework, the chance to travel to a foreign country, improvement of their Chinese language skills

and knowledge about Chinese culture. When asked in the pre-departure interviews about their choice specifically of the Chinese Studies program, all participants were interested in travel, close contact with and access to Chinese people in a real-life settings. They were also drawn by the unique program structure with international internships, and historical connections between history and current experiences in a global context.

The results of this study confirm the outcomes of previous research including Sánchez, Fornerino and Zhang's (2006) findings that their American student participants appeared motivated to use their study abroad as an opportunity to learn a foreign language, seek personal change and improve their future careers. Although informative, this study did not fully investigate the specific motivations for the choice of program type or duration. Several studies (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2003; 2004; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Lewis & Williams, 1994) found that participants were motivated to choose short-term internships, service learning, or other short-term study abroad programs because of the direct contact with host nationals that take place during many of these programs. The study reported here corroborates improvements in their foreign language listening and speaking skills the experience of another culture “first hand that students sought” and personal growth and independence. All participants wanted to immerse themselves in the Chinese culture and expressly desired to experience China through a major metropolitan city.

The review of literature found limited research about participants' motivations for choosing non-traditional structure abroad programs, (like those with, international internships) in lieu of traditional ones (e.g., coursework at a foreign university). In this study, several themes emerged that could help guide future research. One of the top

reasons participants chose the Chinese Studies program was the international internship experience. They were intrigued by the opportunity to intern in a Chinese organization, meet Chinese professionals and spend four to five months outside of the classroom setting in an internship. For the enhancement of international internship programs, it would be helpful to determine why students are choosing particular programs over others. Their motivations could help universities and study abroad organizations create more innovative and beneficial programs. Similarly, research is lacking in the question of participants' motivations for choosing programs that combine a study abroad program with international internships. In the findings of this study, participants revealed that the international internship was the key factor in their choice in the program. Gaining real world international experience through the support of a study abroad program was another major motivating factor to why participants choose this program. These findings confirmed the results of the prior research reviewed in this study.

The study abroad participants studied by Dwyer (2004b) state that they chose programs that allow for experiential learning (internships and service learning) opportunities outside of the classroom to provide greater immersion in the host country culture. Hoffa (1996) and Dessoff (2006) report similar findings—the participants chose programs because they offered a greater cultural experience with opportunities to interact within the culture outside of the classroom. These goals are consistent with general study abroad motivations. However, it is important to note that the majority of American study abroad participants choose international programs without structured experiential learning opportunities.

### **Findings in the Context of Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning**

How do the participants view their learning in international internships?

Furthermore how can their classroom instruction interact with internships? Participants in this international internship program described what, how and why they were learning during their experience abroad. Experiential learning concepts were clearly evident in participants' descriptions: "learning from their experiences," "taking away from the internships," or "learning Chinese so much more in the 'real-life' setting than in a classroom."

Participants' experiences with international internships show them working through the learning process according to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (as referenced in Figure 1, p.26). Students were active participants in learning Chinese language, culture and business norms. Concrete experience was inescapable – students had to interact, use or find out necessary Chinese language vocabulary in order to interact with Chinese co-workers and supervisors. After students had an experience in their internship such as being unaware of Chinese business vocabulary, they analyzed and reflected upon what they had observed about themselves, others and/or the situation. Next, students used this information to develop new skills and concepts, for example, understanding and using knowledge about what was the accepted Chinese vocabulary term or cultural cue. Finally, students reentered the internship with some prior knowledge for a new experience, in which they tested their notions, and in the end, fine tuned their learning. The participant's movement through this cycle follows Kolb's (1984) Model of Experiential Learning precisely from Concrete Experience (doing/having an international internship experience), Reflective Observation (reviewing/reflective on the international

internship experience), Abstract Conceptualization (concluding learning from the international internship experience), and Active Experimentation (planning/trying out what they have learned on the international internship experience). These findings support previous research about the benefits of experiential learning and outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals (Archangeli, 1999; and Brecht & Robinson, 1995).

Students' distinction between classroom learning abroad versus language use and direct cross cultural encounters was the crucial points as to why experiential learning can be so meaningful for students. In a typical classroom situation in the United States, no matter how much educators try to simulate a real-life learning environment in foreign languages, everyone is aware that the class is not taking place in a country in which the culture the language is spoken. As one student indicated, pretending like you are in a Chinese-speaking country is not "real." Keeton and Tate (1978) have offered some insight into the phenomenon of direct encounter with learning through experience:

[. . .] the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied [. . .]. It involves direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it. (p. 2)

Students appeared to be more in touch with the realities being studied when they were participating in the international internship as opposed to short role plays or dialogues in the college classroom. Instead of just thinking about what they would do in a situation or the "encounter," they were able to act upon their observations with concrete learning experiences.



Furthermore, students who participate in internships are given constant feedback, which they can use to further their concepts of what they are learning. Kolb (1984) indicated that feedback is often the missing link in learning, as educational “ineffectiveness could be traced ultimately to a lack of adequate feedback processes” (p. 22). The participants in this study stated that they had “constant feedback” in their internship. This feedback took the form of formal and informal interactions through weekly meetings with supervisors, office meetings, and work interactions with staff and fellow interns, lunch conversations, classroom discussions, journal entries, classroom assignments, faculty conversations, and evaluations.

While participants might not have known appropriate cultural gestures and terminology in each business before they arrived in China, they learned quickly after their experiences in the internships, and given the chance to practice and “test out” their new skills. Other participant-reported improvements in their usage of Chinese corresponded with the experiential learning theory (Kolb 1984) including: answering phones properly at the internship, giving directions to people unfamiliar with Beijing and being able to ask and answer questions rapidly in various tenses. This is an example of the fourth stage of Kolb’s experiential theory, active experimentation. In this stage, the learner applies concepts to the world around them to see what results inform their experience. These examples alone are not necessarily instances of the entire experiential learning process, but rather steps in the model cycle. For example, one student was frustrated that his internship supervisor had to help him with the appropriate phrases for answering the telephone. He did not realize that there was a very specific way to split infinitive answer the phone politely at a business in China. He was equally frustrated that it took several

practice attempts before he could succeed. However, after attempting the task, receiving feedback, observing, and trying again (in keeping with experiential learning theory), he was able to succeed at this task and put the skill in his repertoire. This is an example of Kolb's concrete experience where the learner who does not know what to say or do, observes and reflects on his or her surroundings (reflective observation), which gives rise to a new ideas, or a modification of an existing abstract concepts (abstract conceptualization) to realign culturally specific skills (active experimentation) to enhance the internship experience (concrete experience). These examples of learning from experience during a non-traditional study abroad program support previous research, in particular Hopkins (1999), Katula and Threnhauser (1999), and Montrose (2002). International internships are a good fit for this because the experience forces interactions and engagement with new experiences, intentional feedback, and subsequent actions and experiences.

These specific examples of a learner's process of experience (learner data collection), observation and reflection (data analysis) were present throughout each participant's learning, particularly during the international internships. In addition, the participants indicated that they began to form generalizations about accepted behaviors, gestures, cultural norms and language skills. They were then able to test these recently developed concepts in a new situation in order to gain knowledge. Knowing a participant's (and your own) learning style enables learning to be orientated according to the preferred method. That said, everyone responds to and needs the stimulus of all types of learning styles to one extent or another - it's a matter of using the emphasis that fits best with the given situation and a participant's learning style preferences. Therefore, the cycle seemed

to work for these students and would presumably occur in other programs and that research would be needed to see if there results were replicable under different conditions in experience-based international programs and activities.

### **Making Meaning of International Internships and Study Abroad**

To what extent does participation in an international internship influence changes in how students perceive themselves as global citizens, including their views on social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement? How, if at all, do the participants believe their experience on this program has influenced their lives, their knowledge and goals (academic, personal, linguistic, cultural or professional goals)?

This research examined potential benefits of an international internship as part of a study abroad program. Students' accounting of perceived effects of international internships confirmed that the experience on the Chinese Studies program contributed in a positive manner to participants' lives. Some of these perceived areas of development included learning about Chinese culture, (for instance, eating habits, speaking gestures, appropriate greetings and business practices), developing linguistic skills in Chinese, or finishing an academic major. Others were developmental aspects of personal growth, for instance increased independence, confidence and changes in self-assessment, identity, and vocational direction.

Participants perceived areas of growth or development of knowledge resulting from partaking in this international internship program including: increased open-mindedness and overall confidence, a greater ability to empathize with others before making judgments, and more flexibility and ability to adjust to changes. Every participant

believed he or she had become more sensitive to diversity and more interested in additional learning more about diverse cultures and languages. They revealed a greater desire to travel internationally and a renewed commitment to becoming fluent in Chinese. Finally, when asked to rate certain areas of personal growth “cultural, linguistic, career and academic,” all eight participants attributed the highest growth or development in the areas of cultural and career acquisition.

The perceptions of the students who participated in this study of the Chinese Study program align with previous research. Past research has found that study abroad has had a positive effect on the following areas in the participants’ lives: a more sensitive world view (Myers, Hill, & Harwood, 2005), enhanced cultural awareness (Black & Duhon, 2006), positive influences on personal development, independence, maturity and self-confidence (Black & Duhon, 2006), personal growth and increased sense of personal efficacy (Younes & Asay, 2003), growth in intercultural awareness as well as improved self-awareness (Pennington & Wildermuth, 2005). Barnhart and Groth (1987) asserted that even three-week programs can be “eye-opening” and “life-changing” for their participants (p. 84). Dwyer (2004b) found that “programs of at least six weeks duration can be enormously successful in achieving important academic, personal, career and intercultural development outcomes” (p. 162). Overall, the findings of this study corroborate the body of literature on the positive effects of study abroad and add particular emphasis on the value of an international internship. Educators should ensure that international internship activities are designed and carried out in ways that offer each learner the chance to engage in the manner that suits them best. Also, individuals can be

helped to learn more effectively by the identification of their preferred learning styles and the strengthening of learning through the application of the experiential learning cycle.

Based on these elements, this study suggests that an international internship is more likely to be “value added” for students when it is intentionally organized as an activity that leads to particular learning outcomes; when students apply what they have learned in courses to work experiences, reflect on these experiences, and receive feedback that helps them to improve; when students build mentoring relationships with supervisors, faculty, and peers; when students are exposed to differences across people and in ways of thinking; and when students are asked to use their experiences to clarify their values, interests, and personal goals—including, in this case, their values, interests, and goals related to international internship experiences. In this way it was possible to disentangle the international internship and general study abroad when making meaning of the experience.

### **Study Limitations**

It is essential for researchers to address the limitations of a study, which “reminds the reader what the study is and is *not*—its boundaries—how its results can and cannot contribute to understanding” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 42). The study has endeavored to contribute to the fields of international internships and education abroad. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. This study attempts to analyze international internships experiences at a single study abroad program. The limitations of this study include that it took place abroad in one country with a small group of students. Whether or not the findings will be generalizable to other international internship and study abroad programs is unknown.

This study encountered several limitations during its execution. First, the majority of participants categorized as White, Non-Hispanic females. As a result the study was limited in its ability to generalize to populations beyond this group. A broader spectrum of participants in terms of gender and ethnicity would greatly enhance the population validity of the research. According to the Institute of International Education's Open Doors Report (2016), approximately 65% of study abroad participants are female students. This study's participants were less gender balanced with five females and three males. Consequently, the demographics of this study's participants vary slightly from national trends, which may limit the generalizability of the findings of this study.

Second, this study had a limited number of participants (8). I tried to accommodate for this small sample size by focusing the study on the multiple international internship placements, resulting in a wealth of data that were collected from this small cohort. The study did not use a control group. The use of a control group would have strengthened the study's analysis because non-Chinese Study program participants could have been compared with the Chinese Study program group to better understand if the gains made were due to partaking in the international internship. Student's backgrounds and internships were very different and hard to generalize. Students were also different in their intercultural competence and other aspects of development. Findings are all based on student perceptions and self-reports.

Finally, this study is limited to international internship participants from several U.S. institutions engaged in one specific program. The focus of this study was not a comparative analysis of international internship programs in different institutions around

the world, so this study's findings cannot be necessarily applied to multiple programs across the globe.

### **Implications for Practice**

Study finding suggest abundant implications for international internships and education abroad programs. First, the results suggest that the Chinese Study program's mission and program design empowers participants to engage in an intensive international internship and study abroad experience that enhanced their cross-cultural competence, attitudes, beliefs, values, and meaningfulness of cross cultural vocational experience. While the study's findings point to numerous features that positively impact participants' global competence, global civic engagement, and in-depth knowledge of a new country, the findings also suggest there are elements that can be improved. For example, the Chinese Studies program included a series of courses taken by program participants as a group. The participants shared that these courses provided important background on contemporary issues facing China as a whole, and more importantly in the work environment. However, participants' would have preferred that Chinese nationals were also enrolled in these classes with them. This would have helped them better understand Chinese society and work environment through discussion with Chinese about the cultural, historical, and philosophical foundations of the nation. This observation suggests that programs would be enhanced through a combination of courses with Chinese nationals that cover cultural, historical, and societal backgrounds of a country, coupled with a contemporary course on the nation's work environment would benefit programs like the Chinese Studies program.

Several studies (Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Juraseck et al., 1996; Engle & Engle, 1999; and Pellegrino, 1998) have emphasized the need for a combination of in-class and out-of classroom contact with host nationals. They call for more research about the comparative role of in-class and out-of classroom learning during study abroad programs. This brings up practical issues that must be considered when designing and creating an international internship program such as the Chinese Studies program. For this program the total amount of time spent in country (four-five months) is dictated by the academic calendar. This could potentially set up practical programs in balancing sufficient amount of time in class and participating on the internship for credit. In some cases, the study participants found the intensity of the academic coursework created more work that impeded their growth in the internship experience. It was clear that these participants would like to have spent more time with Chinese nationals in and outside of the internship experience. As a result, program directors must make careful decisions about the pros and cons of scheduling more academic work, which could limit students existing time to explore the culture through exploration and formal or informal interactions with nationals. In the case of the Chinese Studies program, the research suggests modifying the structure of the program in several ways. One option to consider is to extend the program to a six or eight month program to incorporate the academic semester and/or summer and winter breaks. This would allow for additional academic courses and more intentional time for participants to immerse themselves in the Chinese culture.

During the collection of data it was noted that the Chinese Studies Program had been developing a full-time 4 to 4.5 days a week internship program. However, plans were put on hold due to new Chinese visa regulations for international students. The new



Chinese visa regulations effective from June 2013, stated that student visas (for short-term study) may not cover full-time internships. This is an example of political and legal influences putting an end to the development and enrollment of students in such a program. However, if there is any change in the near future, The Chinese Studies program will start to accept students for full-time internships.

Certainly, this was an example of possible realities that may make such modification to the program impossible. In those situations, program directors may consider other possibilities to enhance participants' international internship experience. For example, offering a series of workshops, networking meet-and-greets, lectures, and conversations about internships might be beneficial.

In-country orientations were an important feature of the Chinese Studies program. All eight participants firmly declared that the most important tool in preparing students to intern in China was the in-country orientation. During the in-country meetings, they hoped to learn important vocabulary and cultural expressions used in China, particularly those terms used in everyday Chinese work environments. All eight participants indicated displeasure in the amount of vocabulary preparation and linguistic training provided in the in-country meetings. In fact, one of their most adamant suggestions for future programs was to increase the amount of vocabulary and terminology training for program internships. The participants suggested that the orientation meetings should have been better organized. Prior to in-country orientation, the participants did not receive a schedule of specific topics to be discussed for each day of the orientation. Finally, participant thought that the group should have been better informed about the historical ties between the Chinese Studies program and the internship placements.

The findings of this study confirm the bulk of research surrounding in-country orientations, as most studies have shown that rigorous in-country programming minimizes student anxiety and subsequent culture shock abroad. Several researchers (Citron & Kline, 2001; de Nooy & Hanna, 2003; Furnham, 1993; Kitao, 1993; Levy, 2000) have recommended that in-country “training” concerning the host culture, stages of culture shock and coping strategies to use while abroad, can help prevent panic or culture shock once in the host country. Furthermore, most of the above studies found that in-country orientation or training increases’ students ease in assimilating to the new culture. Archangeli (1999) found that, particularly for non-traditional programs abroad (i.e., internships or service learning) in which students may be unfamiliar with the learning strategies or environment, students tended to be especially nervous and anxious before beginning their experience.

In this study, all eight participants recommended the use of an international internship guidebook or workbook manual to help them reflect on the experience of the internship. Topics that could enhance the Chinese Studies program guidebook include units on: learning more about diversity and aspects of culture, as well as in-country strategies to cope with cultural adjustment, ways to develop intercultural competence, and suggestions for keeping a reflective journal. However, many universities do not incorporate these texts into their programs abroad or into the pre-departure orientations. Although outside the scope of this study, it would be helpful for educators to determine whether there are demonstrable benefits for students in using such literature in any phase of the study abroad process. Although Cohen et al. (2003) published an extensive study of the possible benefits of using CARLA’s guidebooks with study abroad students,

language instructors and study abroad advisors; they used only CARLA's guidebooks and no other materials. Furthermore, unanswered questions emerged from the study by Cohen et al. (2005), and, clearly, one study is not sufficient research on a topic. In general, further research on in-country orientation and training would be a welcome addition to international internship research.

### **The Role of the Internship Supervisor**

In the Chinese Studies program, the internship supervisor assumes the role of supporting, directing, and overseeing the activities of the student while they complete their internship hours. The internship supervisor also plays a major role in evaluating student performance. Furthermore the supervisor assists students' in the attainment of goals and objectives on the "Learning Agreement." The learning agreement contains clearly defined objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student's academic coursework and of utility to the employer. This is co-developed by the student and internship supervisor and approved by the faculty coordinator prior to start of the internship. The internship supervisor also provides necessary training, supervision and routine feedback on performance and expectations. Outside of the classroom, the internship supervisor is the greatest resource for students' immersion experience.

The results of this study clearly show that the internship supervisors were essential to the students' transition into and overall experience on the internship. Participants' experiences with internship supervisor differed greatly from positive engaged supervisors to less engaged and in some cases absent supervisors. This has implications for the design, planning, and execution of the international internship program. First, supervisors need to be available for formal and informal conversations in the internship. These

moments of interaction (e.g. trainings, meetings, e-mails, lunch) were essential to the students' development because they provided instances for the students to ask questions about the situations that they were encountering at the internship. The students found these conversations to be extremely relevant because they were able to get immediate responses or at least explore their curiosity through discussions. Furthermore, the students observed the behavior of the supervisor and co-workers in the internship. Access to these supervisors was important since they were seen as role models. Finally, the students were keen to hear narratives and suggestions that were provided by the supervisor and co-workers and they were more likely to adopt new attitudes as a result.

While fully engaged and supportive internship supervisors have positive effects on interns, then the lack of availability and feedback from supervisors impedes students and can impact the quality of the internship experience. Therefore, the quality of the internship experience hinges on the availability of supervisors to connect with students on many levels through informal and formal channels. Not every supervisor will have the experience or skills to guide, mentor and inspire students. Educators should keep this in mind when developing internships and provide resources and training where the supervisor does not exhibit these qualities or avoid placing students in these experiences. In several cases, internship supervisors were valued greatly by participants because they developed a level of trust that inspired students to step outside of their comfort zone and take on new projects that provided for professional growth and greater contact with co-workers in the organization. This positive supervisory style challenged the student more, and as a result they gained new skills to navigate the organization's culture and work environment.

### **Peer Internship Mentors**

One feature that created a unique opportunity for learning and consequently turned out to be instrumental to all participants was the support they received from fellow interns in their organization and through the program. One of the participants coined the term “internship mentor” to describe the impact their fellow interns had on their overall experience. In this study, the internship mentors took on the role of a guide or coach who advised and assisted the participants during their internship. In some cases, the internship mentors were from the Chinese Study program in others they were from other programs and countries. The internship mentors provided a safety net for participants to engage with for support and comfort. These barriers were countered by peer encouragement through informal conversations, lunches, coffee breaks, sharing of resources, and social media post. This created a common internship community of support, guidance, and encouragement unique to this study. Thus allowing participants who were not supported by their supervisors or where less adventurous to engage with peers to help navigate the internship experience.

### **International Internship Placement**

International internship programs and experiences abroad provide students with experiential learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom context. In the case of the Chinese Studies program, international internships have been an integral part of the program since 1998. By working with organizations and Chinese professionals alike, students gain valuable firsthand experience about the Chinese work environment and society. Programs like this one fall within the purview of education abroad share

characteristics of applied learning and direct engagement in community or professional settings. Successful programs are partnerships that effectively manage and balance the interests of the multiple parties invested in the international internship experience: students, faculty, host institution/program, and on-site host internship organizations, and workplaces.

The findings of this study have implications for practitioners across similar programs coordinated in higher education institutions across the globe. The most significant factor is to empower students to delve more deeply into their ability to compare and contrast cultures by providing them the tools, knowledge, and skills to maximize their internship experience. Organizations such as the National Society for Experiential Education and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education have developed *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*. These standards address concerns and considerations specific to undergraduate learning experiences abroad, to ensure that they follow best practices of education abroad and experiential education in general. These guidelines have been developed to support the educational focus of work- and community-based experiences, whether credit-bearing or non-credit bearing, and to assure the safety and well-being of students and their hosts.

In today's higher education environment, educators are expected to apply their subject matter to the "real world," which is often not an easy undertaking. Kolb (1984) saw experiential learning methods as a link between the classroom and the real world. The participants in this study agreed. They revealed that the learning they experienced on the program was much more applicable to the actuality of interacting with the Chinese

language and culture than was the classroom setting in the United States or even the classroom in China.

Several studies (Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Citron & Kline, 2001; Engle & Engle, 1999; Juraseck et al., 1996; and Pellegrino, 1998) emphasized the need for a combination of outside-the-classroom contact with host nationals and in-class instruction. They called for more research about the role of in-class vs. outside-the-classroom learning during study abroad programs. In fact, one of the questions that emerged from this study is: What is the role of formal instruction (classroom based) in a non-traditional study abroad program? This study's results on the Chinese Studies program indicated that the participants would have preferred to have less formal academic instruction during the in-country segment of their experiences. However, during the study interviews the participants noted that academic courses provided them with the historical and contemporary context to successfully navigate their internship experiences. Therefore, in order to maximize students' learning and their experiences abroad, what is a good balance of formal (in-class) instruction and outside-the-classroom learning in a non-traditional program? More research is needed in order to answer this question.

### **Career Development**

The participants lived experience through international internships provided support for the notion that college students become clearer about their career plans after participating in an internship (Taylor-& Renner, 2003). In addition, the importance of career-related international internships as a part of their global experience and career exploration process was highlighted throughout the student's stories.

The participants in this study developed a sense of confidence that was not apparent prior to the internship and international experience. This reinforces the work of Brookes and Greene (1998) who discuss the importance of career related work internship experiences as vital to the career exploration process. Many of the participants felt the additional benefits of participation in the international internship include smoother entry into full-time employment after graduation as well as better job prospects (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

The opportunity to be immersed in an international internship that fostered cultural interactions in the Chinese work of work influenced the participants' career development in a global setting. The participants' exploration of self and the Chinese world of work was critical in their career choices (Blustein, Gill, Kenna, & Murphy, 1996). Blustein also wrote about the importance of understanding work within various cultural contexts. According to the participants' the cultural contexts of the international internship experiences were important learning opportunities as they navigated the Chinese world of work.

In summary, this study's findings support previous research on career development that internships and study abroad programs must be intentionally designed to maximize the students learning and overall immersion experience can impact career development.



### **Recommendations for Higher Education Professionals**

International internship programs and experiences abroad provide students with experiential learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom context. With the popularity and number of these offerings having grown significantly in recent years, American universities and colleges need to establish recommendations for best practices that can help inform the development of these programs abroad and the vetting of international internship program partners.

Organizations such as the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education are working on developing recommendations for international internship programs based in the U.S. However, when international internship programs are part of education abroad, their international context raises different considerations. The hands-on and community-based nature of international internship programs makes the intersection of U.S. higher education with international organizations even more complex than in other education abroad models. Whether or not credit is awarded for international internship programs, they call for recommendations specific to education abroad.

International internship programs take place in a diversity of models: volunteer, service-learning, part-time and full-time internships, and professional work experience, all of which may be credit or non-credit bearing. These programs take place across all academic disciplines; they may be part of a single course or offered as full programs, lasting anywhere from a few weeks to a full year. International internship programs

abroad may be part of the academic curriculum at an international host institution or education abroad program center; they may be faculty-led, hybrid, island, or field research programs.

These recommendations focus on best practices common to international internship programs. International internship programs that fall within the purview of education abroad share characteristics of applied learning and direct engagement in community or professional settings. And all successful international internship programs are partnerships that effectively manage and balance the interests of the multiple parties invested in the experience: students, home institutions, host institutions, facilitating organizations, and on-site host communities, organizations, and workplaces—while promoting transparency of process, clarity with regard to learning goals, students' health and well-being, and ideals of reciprocity and mutual benefit.

The recommendations below use the terms international internship program to mean internship and work experiences of all types and duration, whether they constitute a full program, are offered as component of a program, or are an individual experience. The common denominator is that these take place abroad, and contain an educational component, whether more formally academic or more broadly experiential. These recommendations cannot specifically address every possible configuration of program and experience; they are meant to be both aspirational and concretely applicable, offering the field of education abroad signposts for best practices in this new and rapidly evolving domain of activity.

## **International Internship Program Recommendations**

### **Program Development**

The research revealed important data from interviews and interactions with participants, faculty, program coordinators, and internship supervisors that can inform best practices for international internship programs. One main area is that international internship programs should articulate the value of the experience in relation to the education abroad institution's/organization's mission and goals, and describe how the international internship program enhances and supports these.

In addition to the framing and articulation of the international internship program within the context of broader academic, professional, and/or experiential goals, there are more concrete factors for organizations to keep in mind in the developing of international internship programs and the vetting of potential partners:

For example, does the international internship partner provide?

- a work environment and facilities that are adequate and appropriate to the scope and nature of the work at hand;
- a safe workplace, with protections against discrimination, harassment, and exploitation of the student;
- available staff to adequately supervise students;
- projects and tasks that are appropriate for a student;
- specific, structured job descriptions;
- onsite orientation and training;
- an openness to introducing students to other aspects of the work or volunteer location, for example, informational interviews with executives, partners, and social or community events;
- the overall capacity for a high-quality international internship experience?

In establishing terms with the international internship provider, the following points should be addressed, so that they can then be communicated clearly to the

students. These terms should be finalized prior to the beginning of the international internship experience, with a written agreement between parties including:

- a timeline outlining dates for the application, a period for application review, the screening and interview process, and notification of acceptance, if applicable;
- start and end date;
- total hour requirements, with daily or weekly specified hours;
- additional fees and costs, if any;
- compensation, if any;
- organizational and/or reporting relationships, specifically, the appointment of a designated supervisor at the international internship organization to support the student and manage the relationship;
- agreed-upon criteria for any performance reviews and evaluation;
- principal duties, tasks, and responsibilities of the student;
- confidentiality, non-disclosure and/or non-compete policies;
- an understanding and commitment that the primary purpose of the international internship experience is learning, and that students not be asked to perform tasks beyond their level of training and skill.

### **Student Outreach, Placement, Training, and Supervision**

In communications with students prior to departure, international internship programs should ensure that materials communicate:

- an accurate description of the international internship program and any associated additional costs;
- an accurate description of the distance between the international internship location and student housing, and the means and cost of transportation;
- deadlines and timetables for the international internship placement: application, interviews, confirmation of the placement, start and end dates;
- to the extent possible, the terms of the international internship placement, including learning objectives and requirements for the granting of academic credit.

In identifying placements and opportunities for students, international internship programs should ensure the best possible match between the placement and the student's goals, knowledge, skills, and competencies (including target language).

In confirming placements with students, international internship programs should provide the following information:

- name and description of the host organization, and its context (cultural, economic, community);
- scope and nature of assigned responsibilities;
- respective responsibilities of the home institution or education abroad organization, the international internship experience provider, and the student;
- primary contact on-site;
- required time commitment (hours per day, number of weeks);
- requirements and competencies that will impact the student's success in the placement (skills, academic background, and language ability);
- expectations of professionalism and appropriate conduct;
- expectations of the student's obligation to act within the limits of their knowledge and competencies, and within the role prescribed for them;
- learning objectives for the internship and requirements for the receipt of academic credit;
- any other policies and procedures that govern the international internship placement such as dress code.

In supervising students' international internship placements, American universities and colleges as well as education abroad organizations should ensure that:

- faculty working with international internship programs are effectively trained to oversee them, monitor student performance, maintain ongoing communication with the student, and, if applicable, evaluate the internship experience for credit;
- the organization maintains open channels of communication throughout the experience with the faculty, the host organization, and the student;
- there is a mechanism for evaluation of the international internship partner;
- student learning objectives are being met;
- there is a clear distinction between the learning role and the work or service role of students, and that the education abroad organization is prepared to anticipate or navigate any conflicts that might arise between these roles;
- the international internship environment is safe and non-threatening;
- the student is being adequately supervised, and offered feedback where helpful and appropriate.

## **Academics, Courses, Grading Criteria**

International internship programs should provide clear and detailed information on:

- learning goals, intended outcomes, and the connection between experiential and academic components;
- any academic or linguistic requirements for placement;
- if applicable, credit hours awarded for the internship experience, the number of work hours required to be awarded credit, and how hours are verified;
- requirements for the successful completion of the academic component, if applicable
- any other policies or procedures governing the international internship program.

## **Health, Safety, Security and Risk Management:**

The health and safety of students is of upmost importance to any international internship program. In addition, international internship programs should:

- provide clear information on any potential health and safety risks specific to the context in which students will be working;
- review relevant individual student health information prior to the arrival on site, to identify any special considerations or accommodations that might need to be taken into account in the placement process;
- clearly articulate policies and practices that protect the health and safety of students in organizational or community settings in the event of an outbreak of disease or other health/safety risks;
- educate students on their personal responsibility for their own physical and mental health and safety while abroad, on available resources to support their health and safety, and on their right to decline when asked to perform activities outside their scope of training or their abilities.

## **Culture, Values and the Host Community**

International internship programs have an ethical obligation to respect the host community's cultural norms and values. To facilitate this:

- marketing materials for the program should portray the host community with dignity;
- students should receive training that explains the appropriate nature, scope and limitations of their volunteer activity, and the parameters of what the home

- institution or facilitating organization considers to be appropriate relationships with members of the host community;
- student training should emphasize sensitivity to the risks of imposing their own cultural values when engaging with low-resource communities in different cultural contexts.

### **Specific Considerations for Internship Programs Abroad**

International Internship Programs provide students an opportunity to gain skills and content area knowledge while immersed in a professional or work context. The practical learning enhances, but may not be necessary to, the student's academic degree or future career or educational goals. Internships involve the structured, guided accomplishment of assigned projects and tasks, and an assessment of their reflection on the experience. Academic credit may be awarded based on the evaluation of the completed projects and tasks, and the grading of the internship project assignment. The internship host, the home institution, and/or the organization facilitating the experience should work together to ensure that the internship experience satisfies established learning goals. Internships may be full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, credit or non-credit, academic or co-curricular.

### **Monitoring and Supervision, Training in Professionalism**

Internships are supervised and monitored indirectly by a party other than the home institution. For this reason home institutions and education abroad programs should ensure that:

- faculty working with internship providers are trained to oversee international internships, monitor student performance, provide ongoing communication with the student during the internship, and evaluate the internship for credit;
- international internship providers and work site staff are trained to oversee, monitor performance, and evaluate internships according to agreed-upon criteria;

- there is a mechanism for the evaluation of the hosting company/organization facilitating the internship.

### **The Academics of Credit-Bearing Internships**

When international internships abroad are credit-bearing, home institutions and education abroad programs are responsible for their respective roles in ensuring that internships:

- are integrated into students' overall academic degree plan;
- establish clear criteria for the awarding of credit;
- have a clear syllabus or internship plan, including criteria for evaluation;
- distinguish explicitly between academic and co-curricular internships, if applicable;
- provide the opportunity for student reflection on the internship experience.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The analysis raises a number of questions for further research on international internships. This study adds to the overall knowledge of international internships and how participants make meaning of their experiences. However there are unanswered questions that are worth exploring further to inform this body of research. One of the ways programs prepare students for their international internship experience is through pre-departure and in-country orientations. For many participants this is their first exposure and education to the culture and nuances of the country they will be interning in. This can have an impact on the quality of their entire experience. Future research on participants' impressions of these programs and which factors influence and change perceptions of students would help in the design of more effective programs.

This study highlighted that experiential learning is receiving increased attention in the higher education community with special consideration given to international



internships. Prior studies have shown that U.S. based internships were recognized as one of the high-impact educational practices suggesting that internships can increase retention and student engagement (Kuh, 2008). Internships can also provide opportunities for application of academic knowledge (Shoenfelt, Kottke, & Stone, 2012) and attainment of professional skills (Shoenfelt, Stone, & Kottke, 2013), which can provide advantages for both marketability and compensation in securing jobs after graduation (Gault, Leach & Duey, 2010). Future inquiry could explore these outcomes in the context of international internships.

Little is known on how employers view international internships. One study on U.S. internships found that more than 80% of employers believe that completion of a supervised and evaluated internship or community-based project would be very or fairly effective in ensuring that U.S. college graduates have the requisite skills and knowledge for success at their company; two-thirds indicated that a faculty supervisor's assessment of these types of experiential learning would be useful in evaluating a candidate's potential for success (Hart, 2008). Finally, separate research found that more than 70% of employers prefer to hire college graduates with relevant work experience; 60% of these employers prefer that this work experience be gained through an internship or co-op. This research highlights that for employers the value of an internship comes from its intrinsic blend of theory and practical application. A quality internship represents a legitimate and preferred method of gaining experience which cannot be typically gained in a classroom setting and is valued by employers as the best indication that recent graduates have the skills to be effective (Hart, 2008). However no research has explored employers' perceptions and attitudes on the value of student's international internship experience and

the requisite skills and knowledge gained and potential success towards retention in their organization. Future research should explore how student's international internship experience adds value to their organization's talent acquisition needs.

American students' perceptions of internships is also positive (Cash, 1993), with students indicating that application of academic knowledge as well as development of workplace awareness and specific skills were important benefits of completing an internship. This study did provide an initial context of how students perceive their international internship experience through one study abroad program in China. With this knowledge gained, there is an opportunity for future research to explore more deeply student's perceptions of international internships across multiple study abroad programs and countries/cities around the globe. This research might be most beneficial if the country is categorized through the lenses of the most popular study abroad destinations by country or continent, adding locations to the current education abroad research.

While the research in this study supports the importance of international internships in higher education, there can be a great degree of variability among internships with respect to their learning potential (O'Neill, 2010). Future research should explore how programs like the Chinese Studies program can take intentional actions to ensure the educational quality of the internship experience and establish best practices for helping students learn about careers and transition into the workforce (O'Neill, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

This study has contributed to unraveling the complex tangle of what American undergraduate students experience on international internships. Many questions remain to

be answered concerning the value, feasibility, and quality of international internships. However, by exploring these inquiries the participants in this study advanced understanding of the value of international internships and how students make meaning through their lived experience.

International internships merit a more rigorous research agenda from academic scholars, since international internship programs are the fastest-developing type of education abroad programs and have a growing percentage of overall study abroad participation (IIE, 2016). Needed research includes how international internships can benefit participants and what exactly students can learn from work experience abroad. Since increasing numbers of students are incorporating international internships as part of their academic careers, educational institutions need to improve their programs and increase student access to such opportunities. Accomplishing these tasks will not be easy, particularly in the face of changing international internships trends. However, educators, study abroad programs, and institutions of higher education can intentionally design international internship opportunities that empower students to make meaning of their cross-cultural competence, attitudes, beliefs, values, global competence, and global civic engagement.

Fortunately many U.S. colleges and universities are already working on helping students articulate those connections through “unpacking sessions.” Unpacking sessions include discussion of skills and competencies sought by employers, reflection exercises focused on making connections to the student’s stated career goals, and practice

presenting those gained skills and competencies both in resumes and job interviews (Gardner, Steglitz, & Gross, 2009).

Finally, while international internships are inherently based on the commonly understood concepts of experiential learning, there are few standards among programs that offer this type of experience in an international setting. Often the only thread tying together international internship experiences is that they all provide learning which transcends the domestic classroom. While NAFSA has contributed in developing CAS' Internship Standards and Guidelines (Clark & White, 2010)), the field of international education should consider implementing standards for good practice specifically for international internships similar to those recently adopted for study abroad. If standards of program development and administration, outcomes assessment, and academic credit structure for international internships are accepted by the higher education community, the quality of these programs will improve, thus benefitting all stakeholders.

Research has demonstrated the value of international internships. However, employers' view of their value remains unclear. It is time to embrace the interconnectedness of today's economy and global systems to promote greater partnerships among higher education, the wider business world, and students' necessary to achieve the common goals of global workforce development. Only with this level of collaboration will the true value of the international internship experience be utilized to produce graduates and global citizens with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to tackle the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS AND QUESTIONS

### **Part I: Interview Protocols for the First-Interview**

- **Sample:** Selected traditionally aged NEPSU undergraduate students who will be participating in an international internship experience through the Chinese Studies Program in Beijing, China.
- **Equipment:** Check the proper functioning of all recording equipment prior to the interview. At the beginning of the session I will:
  - Introduce myself to the student and thank her/him for taking the time to participate
- **Secure an Interview/Informed Consent Form:** Ask students to complete an interview consent form in advance of the interview and go over that form with each student before beginning the interview process. Stressed the voluntary nature of the interview and allowed the participants to terminate the interview at any time.
  - **Review the informed consent form**
- **Obtain signature for two copies of consent form**
- **Provide interviewees with a copy of consent form for their records.**
  - *Thank you for agreeing to participate. I have planned this session to last no longer than 60 minutes.*
- **Ensure Confidentiality**
- **Ask permission to Tape record the Interview**
  - *To facilitate my note-taking, I will like to digitally record our conversation today. Only I will have privy to the recordings, which will be stored in a secure file until they are transcribed and destroyed.*
- **Provide the “Big Picture” and overview of study’s purpose.**
- **Background information on the interview:**
  - Date/Time/Location
  - My academic and professional experience – academic major and job title
- **No right-or-wrong answers:** Remind the student there are no right/wrong, good/bad answers. Explained that everyone’s experience will not be the same.
- **Begin the interview:**
  - *The purpose of this interview is for me to learn about you and your academic experiences before taking part in the Chinese Studies Program. If I ask you anything that you do not feel comfortable answering please feel free to tell me that you do not want to answer the question. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?*
- **Begin recording**
- **Interview summary:** At the conclusion of the interview I will thank each participant and provide a general summary of the experience at a later time.

### **First-Interview**

- The following questions will be used as a guide. Some may not be asked if the answer is gleaned from previous responses. Follow-up probes may be used in the context of each interview to elicit greater detail and information.
- **Introductory Questions**

1. Tell me little bit about background?

Possible probes:

- Where did you grow up?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What is your country of citizenship?
- What languages do you speak?
- What is your racial background?
- What is your academic major?

2. How did you decide to attend NEPSU?

Possible probes:

- What role did your family play in your decision?
- How did you first learn about this institution?
- Did you consider other schools? If so, how did you choose this one?

Prior to the experience, what did you hope to gain from the international internship?

3. What are your impressions of this institution so far?

Possible probes:

- Tell me about making the transition from [prior experiences (e.g. high school, working, other institutions)] to this institution?

4. Please talk me through what has led you to this point of deciding to participate in the Chinese Studies Program?

5. Why did you decide to participate in the Chinese Studies Program?

Possible probes:

- What did you think when you first read the materials on the program?
- What are your impressions of the program so far [application process, selection process, the internship, travel arrangements, living in Beijing, China]

6. What role did the opportunity to do an internship play, if any in your decision to go on this program?

### **Life History Questions**

*The following set of questions is about your family and your interest in careers as well as the Chinese Studies Program*

7. Tell me about your family.

Possible probes:

Who lived with you growing up?

What did your parents (or primary caretakers) do for a living?

What is the educational background of your parents (or primary caretakers)?

Do you have siblings?

If yes, how many brothers and/or sisters do you have?

What order are you in the family?

8. Have you ever traveled abroad before? If so where?

-Did your previous travel experiences influence your decision to travel to China?

-Can you think of an example of how your parents (or primary caretakers) were involved in your international travel experiences growing up?

9. Why did you choose your current major?

10. Tell me about your career aspirations growing up?

Possible probes:

What did you want to be when you were little?

How did your ideas about what you wanted to be change from then until now?

Why did your ideas about what you wanted to be change?

11. What are your goals for after college?

12. How confident do you feel about your abilities to succeed in this (career field)?

13. What supports or barriers did you encounter from the first time you made the decision to take (career field or major)?

### **Internship Expectations Questions**

14. Do you have any previous internship experience?

15. How would you define an internship?

Possible probe:

What does it mean to be an intern?

16. Why did you choose to pursue an international internship at [Chinese Studies Program]?

Possible Probe

Who or what influenced you to intern at this organization instead of going somewhere else?

17. What do you expect to gain from the international internship? [Focus on experiences]

Possible Probe

What do you hope to learn?

Do you have formal learning objectives?

18. How does this apply to your career goals?

19. What specific information has the Chinese Studies Program provided you in preparation for this experience?

20. Please describe the Chinese Studies Program application process for the internship?

21. Do you have any expectations and concerns about traveling to China for this international internship experience?

22. How do you define global citizenship?

### **Wrap-up Questions?**

23. Is there anything else about your family or your experiences before college that you would like to add?

24. Do you have any questions for me?

### **At the End of the Interview**

I will thank the participant for her/him time and insights.

Remind the interviewee that I will be contacting her/him to schedule a second interview session during their international internship in China.



## **Part II: Interview Protocol for the Second Interview**

*Hello, thank you for meeting with me again today. The questions in this interview will focus on your recent transition period in the Chinese Studies Program. I am interested in learning how this experience has informed your international internship both inside and outside the classroom. If I ask you anything that you do not feel comfortable answering please feel free to tell me that you do not want to answer that question. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?*

### **Date of Interview**

*Before you left for China we talked about your family, academic and career interests, and why you decided to take part in the China Studies Program. This time I would like to ask you some questions about current international internship experience and how you have made the transition from NESPU. I would like to ask you some questions about your life in the international internship, in class, and outside of class.*

1. What is the name of the organization where you are interning and your title?

Possible Probes:

Please describe the organization (culture, people, physical office space)?  
When did you begin the internship?

2. Who is your internship supervisor?

3. What was the placement process into the internship experience like?

4. What learning objectives have you developed for the internship as required by the Chinese Studies Program?

5. Describe a typical day in your internship, from the time you begin until the time you end.

Possible probes:

How many hours per week do you work, on average?

How do you balance academic work and the internship?

What are the specific tasks/responsibilities and projects are you working on?

Did you have a clear description of the expectations and accomplishments for the internship?

How will you be evaluated?

6. In what ways has being in this experience affected your relationships with family and friends?

Possible probes:

How often do you talk to your parents/caretakers/siblings/friends?

How often do you text/e-mail/Skype/ with them?

7. Tell me about your living situation?

Possible probes:

Where do you live?  
 Who do you live with?  
 In what ways has your living situation affected your experience at  
 (Chinese Studies Program)

8. Tell me about your impression of your experience at (Chinese Studies Program) so far?

Possible probes:

What have you liked most about the school so far this semester?

What has been the most challenging thing about this semester?

9. What supports or barriers have you encountered over the last few weeks?

10. How (if at all) did you feel involved, a part of, connected with, comfortable at [name of the internship organization]?

11. Tell me about what it was like learning the new culture of [name of the internship organization]?

Possible probes:

Did you feel comfortable and “at home” in the organization?

What were some of the most difficult problems you’ve faced there?

12. Tell me about what it’s like for you as a (man, woman, student of color) person getting used to life as a student intern at [name of the internship organization]? [Prompt for positive, as well as negative, aspects if needed.]

13. How, if at all, do you think the internship experience adds something you wouldn’t get just from the academic piece?

14. Is there anything you feel you could have been more prepared for?

### **The Supervisor**

15. Can you please describe the relationship you have with your internship supervisor?

16. Is it productive? [Probe: If yes or no, how? Can you reflect on how his/her style made it less/more productive for you?

17. How do you receive feedback? Do you receive a mid-term and final employer evaluation?

### **Internship Learning Experience**

18. What is the nature of the learning taking place in an internship experience?

-If yes, how was the learning defined? If no, explain what was missing?

19. What are you learning/struggling with/experiencing/gaining that is different than any internship (in the US)?

20. Has this internship met your expectations so far

21. In your first interview, we talked about your initial impressions of the Chinese Studies Program. Tell me about your impressions of your experience now?

22. Tell me about the skills that you feel you're learning or improving upon through the Chinese Studies Program?

Possible probe:

How confident do you feel about your skills?

23. How would you describe your experience working as part of this international internship?

24. Can you provide any notable instances of your international internship?

Possible Probes:

What stands out?

Additional examples you would like to share?

### **Global Citizenship Questions**

25. What does it mean to be a global citizen?

24. Do you feel you are gaining a good understanding of the Chinese culture and society?

25. Do you feel you need to educate the people in my host country about American culture and society?

26. Are you aware of political, economic, and social events occurring around the world?

Possible probes

In China?

In Asia?

In the United States?

27. Do you think while studying or working in another country I should assimilate to the culture of the host country?

28. Do you feel comfortable interacting with the native people of your host country?

29. What does it mean to think of yourself as a global citizen?

30. Do you believe the internship experience has impacted your role as a global citizen?

### **Wrap-up Questions?**

31. Is there anything else about your experience, either inside or outside the classroom that you would like to add?

32. Do you have any questions for me?

### **At the End of the Interview**

I will thank the participant for her/him time and insights.

Remind the interviewee that I will be contacting her/him to schedule a third and final interview once they return to the United States at the conclusion of their international internship in China.

### **Part III: Interview Protocols for the Third Interview**

*Hello, thank you for meeting with me again today. The questions in this interview will focus on your experience in the Chinese Studies Program. I am interested in learning how this experience, including your international internship influenced your learning.. If I ask you anything that you do not feel comfortable answering please feel free to tell me that you do not want to answer that question. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?*

*In our last conversation we focused on Chinese Studies Program half way through the experience. This time I would like to ask you some questions about how the entire international internship experience informed you as a global citizen as well as how it might impact your future career goals.*

1. Looking back on the international internship and Chinese Studies Program, what have you learned from this experience?

Possible probes

How has it impacted your future career goals?

2. What specific projects and work assignments did you complete in the internship?

3. What learning objectives did you successfully achieve? Why?

Possible probes:

What learning objectives did you not achieve? Why?

4. In what ways has the experience in China influenced your relationships with family and friends upon your return?

Possible probes:

How often did you talk to your parents/caretakers/siblings/friends?  
 How often did you text/e-mail/Skype/ with them?

5. How do you feel about the international internship experience now that you have spent a semester in the Chinese Studies Program?

Possible probes:

How did the experience inform your global citizenship?

What were your impressions of the Chinese culture?

Did these impressions change from the time you started the internship until now?

Would you recommend the Chinese Studies Program to other students?

6. What were the most challenging aspects of international internship?

7. Looking back, what were the major supports or barriers you encountered over the course of this semester?

8. How (if at all) did you feel involved, a part of, connected with, comfortable at [name of the internship organization]?

9. Tell me about what it was like learning the new culture of [name of the internship organization]?

Possible probes:

Did you eventually feel comfortable and “at home” in the organization?

What were some of the most difficult problems you’ve faced there?

10. After completing the internship, what do you now know that you gained from the internship and the Chinese Studies Program?

11. Is there anything you feel you could have been more prepared for?

### **The Supervisor**

12. Can you please describe your overall relationship you have with your internship supervisor?

13. How were work assignments given you?

14. How did you receive feedback? Did you receive a mid-term and final employer evaluation?

15. Did you complete a student evaluation? What type of feedback did you provide?

### **Internship Learning Experience**

16. What was nature of the learning taking place in an internship experience?
17. Do you feel you had a learning experience on the internship?
18. In what ways did participation in the internship enhance your college experience?
19. Has this internship met your expectations?
20. How has this internship experience impacted your future career goals at this point?  
Possible probe:  
Has it reinforced or changed your future career goals?
21. In your third interview, we talked about your mid semester impressions of the Chinese Studies Program. Have your impressions changed since that point?
22. Tell me about the skills that you feel you learned or improved upon through the Chinese Studies Program?

### **Global Citizenship Questions**

24. Now that you have returned from China, what does it mean to be a global citizen? Do you think of yourself as a global citizen?
27. Since the end of the experience do you feel you have a good understanding of the Chinese culture and society?
32. Do you think while studying or working in another country you assimilated to the culture of the host country?
33. Did you feel comfortable interacting with the native people of my host country?
34. Do you believe the internship experience has impacted your role as a global citizen?
35. Global awareness refers to understanding the interconnected nature of the world and having the knowledge and understanding of global problems.

Do you believe that you are more globally aware as a result of participating in the international internship through the Chinese Studies program?

Possible Probes:

Please explain how and why or why not?  
Please provide examples if possible.

**Wrap-up Questions?**

36. Is there anything else about your experience, either inside our outside the classroom that you would like to add?

37. Do you have any questions for me?

**At the End of the Interview**

I will thank the participant for her/him time and insights.

**Part IV: Interview Protocols for the Fourth Interview**

*Hello, thank you for meeting with me again today. The questions in this interview will focus on your experience in the Chinese Studies Program. I am interested in learning how this experience, including your international internship influenced your learning.. If I ask you anything that you do not feel comfortable answering please feel free to tell me that you do not want to answer that question. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?*

*In our last conversation we focused on Chinese Studies Program half way through the experience. This time I would like to ask you some questions about how the entire international internship experience informed you as a global citizen as well as how it might impact your future career goals.*

1. Looking back on the international internship and Chinese Studies Program, what have you learned from this experience?

Possible probes

How has it impacted your future career goals?

2. What specific projects and work assignments did you complete in the internship?

3. What learning objectives did you successfully achieve? Why?

Possible probes:

What learning objectives did you not achieve? Why?

4. In what ways has the experience in China influenced your relationships with family and friends upon your return?

Possible probes:

How often did you talk to your parents/caretakers/siblings/friends?

How often did you text/e-mail/Skype/ with them?

5. How do you feel about the international internship experience now that you have spent a semester in the Chinese Studies Program?

Possible probes:

- How did the experience inform your global citizenship?
- What were your impressions of the Chinese culture?
- Did these impressions change from the time you started the internship until now?
- Would you recommend the Chinese Studies Program to other students?

6. What were the most challenging aspects of international internship?
7. Looking back, what were the major supports or barriers you encountered over the course of this semester?
8. How (if at all) did you feel involved, a part of, connected with, comfortable at [name of the internship organization]?
9. Tell me about what it was like learning the new culture of [name of the internship organization]?
 

Possible probes:

  - Did you eventually feel comfortable and “at home” in the organization?
  - What were some of the most difficult problems you’ve faced there?
10. After completing the internship, what do you now know that you gained from the internship and the Chinese Studies Program?
11. Is there anything you feel you could have been more prepared for?

### **The Supervisor**

12. Can you please describe your overall relationship you have with your internship supervisor?
13. How were work assignments given you?
14. How did you receive feedback? Did you receive a mid-term and final employer evaluation?
15. Did you complete a student evaluation? What type of feedback did you provide?

### **Internship Learning Experience**

16. What was nature of the learning taking place in an internship experience?
17. Do you feel you had a learning experience on the internship?
18. In what ways did participation in the internship enhance your college experience?



19. Has this internship met your expectations?

20. How has this internship experience impacted your future career goals at this point?

Possible probe:

Has it reinforced or changed your future career goals?

21. In your third interview, we talked about your mid semester impressions of the Chinese Studies Program. Have your impressions changed since that point?

22. Tell me about the skills that you feel you learned or improved upon through the Chinese Studies Program?

### **Global Citizenship Questions**

24. Now that you have returned from China, what does it mean to be a global citizen? Do you think of yourself as a global citizen?

27. Since the end of the experience do you feel you have a good understanding of the Chinese culture and society?

32. Do you think while studying or working in another country you assimilated to the culture of the host country?

33. Did you feel comfortable interacting with the native people of my host country?

34. Do you believe the internship experience has impacted your role as a global citizen?

35. Global awareness refers to understanding the interconnected nature of the world and having the knowledge and understanding of global problems.

Do you believe that you are more globally aware as a result of participating in the international internship through the Chinese Studies program?

Possible Probes:

Please explain how and why or why not?

Please provide examples if possible.

### **Wrap-up Questions?**

36. Is there anything else about your experience, either inside our outside the classroom that you would like to add?

37. Do you have any questions for me?

**At the End of the Interview**

I will thank the participant for her/him time and insights.

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT



### Boston College Lynch School of Education Consent Form Informed Consent to participate in Research Study: Making Meaning of International Internships in Beijing China Researcher Name: Mark Kenyon

#### Project Consent Form

#### Type of Consent: Adult Consent Form

#### What is the Research?

You have been asked to take part in a research study about the international internship experience. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which participants' international internship experiences may or may not align with the tenets of experiential learning theory, internship learning objectives and global citizenship.

#### Why have I been asked to take part?

**You are a full-time undergraduate student participating in an international internship through the Chinese Studies Program.**

I would like you to take part in three interviews about your international internship experience. Each conversation will take place for approximately one hour. The first interview will take place before your trip departure, the second interview will take place during your trip to China, and the third interview will occur after you return. We will talk about your motivation, experiences, and outcomes for the internship experience.

We will also request your student data to be used for analysis in our project. This will include your application for the China Studies program; resume; internship learning contract; international internship job description and evaluation form; reflective internship journal; and 10 page internship paper.

During the international internship experience, we would like to travel to Beijing China to conduct a site observation. The goal is to visit you in your international internship environment, meet your internship supervisor, and attend an internship seminar.

#### Voluntary Participation

Participation in this project is *voluntary*—you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. You may stop participating in the study at any time for any reason.

### **Risks**

We do not think any risks are involved in taking part in this study, but this study may include risks that are unknown at this time.

### **Benefits**

Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their international internship experience.

### **Privacy**

Your privacy will be protected and all responses will be stored on a password protected computer. Regulators, sponsors or Institutional Review Board Members that oversee research may see research records to make sure that the researchers have followed regulatory requirements. All research data will be stored in a locked file cabinet or a password-protected computer, and will be destroyed after the data has been analyzed.

If a BC researcher finds out during the talk that that child abuse or neglect is suspected, the BC researcher is required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to state officials as required by Massachusetts State law .

We will make every effort to keep your research records confidential, but it cannot be assured. Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you, may be looked at by the Boston College IRB or Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research.

If a tape recorder is used, it will only be used to remind researchers what was said during the interview.

The facilitators of all components of the project, including graduate students, have been trained in CITI human subjects' certification.

### **Payment**

You will receive a \$25 American Express Gift Card at the completion of each interview.

### **Audiotape Permission**

I have been told that the interviews/focus groups will be tape recorded only if I agree.

I have been told that I can state that I don't want the discussion to be taped and it will not be. I can ask that the tape be turned off at any time.

I agree to be audio taped \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

### **Questions**

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding this evaluation. If I have any additional questions about the evaluation, I may call Mark Kenyon at (617) 254-2034.

If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Boston College Office for Research Protections at (617) 552-4778 or [irb@bc.edu](mailto:irb@bc.edu).

I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

This study was reviewed by the Boston College Institutional Review Board and its approval was granted on *[insert approval date]*.

If you agree to the statements above and agree to participate in this study, please sign below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to take part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I would not like to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE DATE

**APPENDIX C:**  
**Sample email sent to students to invite them to participate in study**

Study Recruitment E-Mail #1

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As a current Boston College student you are invited to participate in a research study investigating international internships. The goal is to find out how students make meaning of their international internship experiences. The study will consist of participating in a series of three interviews. The interviews will explore your experience on the international internship in Beijing China through the Chinese Studies Program. For each interview you complete you will receive a \$25 American Express Gift Card. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to participate at any point in time. If you are interested in participating, please contact me directly. I can be reached at [kenyonma@bc.edu](mailto:kenyonma@bc.edu) or (617) 254-2034.

I am very excited about this project and hope that you would consider participating.

Sincerely,  
Mark Kenyon

Study Recruitment E-Mail #2 and #3

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I hope that you are having a good experience in your international internship. I am asking you to participate in a one-hour interview to talk about your experience. Remember you can choose to withdraw from the study at any time. I can be reached at [kenyonma@bc.edu](mailto:kenyonma@bc.edu) or (617) 254-2034. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Mark Kenyon

**APPENDIX D:  
PARTICIPANT LIST**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Year in College</b>	<b>Major</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Relevant Factors</b>	<b>International Internship Placement</b>
Alice	Junior – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	English	African American	1 <sup>st</sup> international Experience	Media/Communication
Elizabeth	Junior – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	International Business	Caucasian	Oldest participant - 25 years/Veteran  Extensive international experience	International Trading
Adam	Sophomore – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	International Studies and Chinese	African American		International Sales
Lisa	Junior – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	International Relations and Chinese Cultural Studies	Asian	Chinese American	Sports Education
Heather	Junior – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Accounting	Caucasian	International Student from Germany  Extensive international experience	Accounting
Michael	Sophomore – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Finance and Asian Studies	Caucasian	Extensive international experience	Finance

Daniel	Junior – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Economics and Pre- Med	Asian	Chinese American  Parents participated in the  Tiananmen Square protests of 1989	Bio-Technology
Angie	Junior – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	International Business	Asian	Filipino American  Study Aboard in Japan	Marketing/Communi cation



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